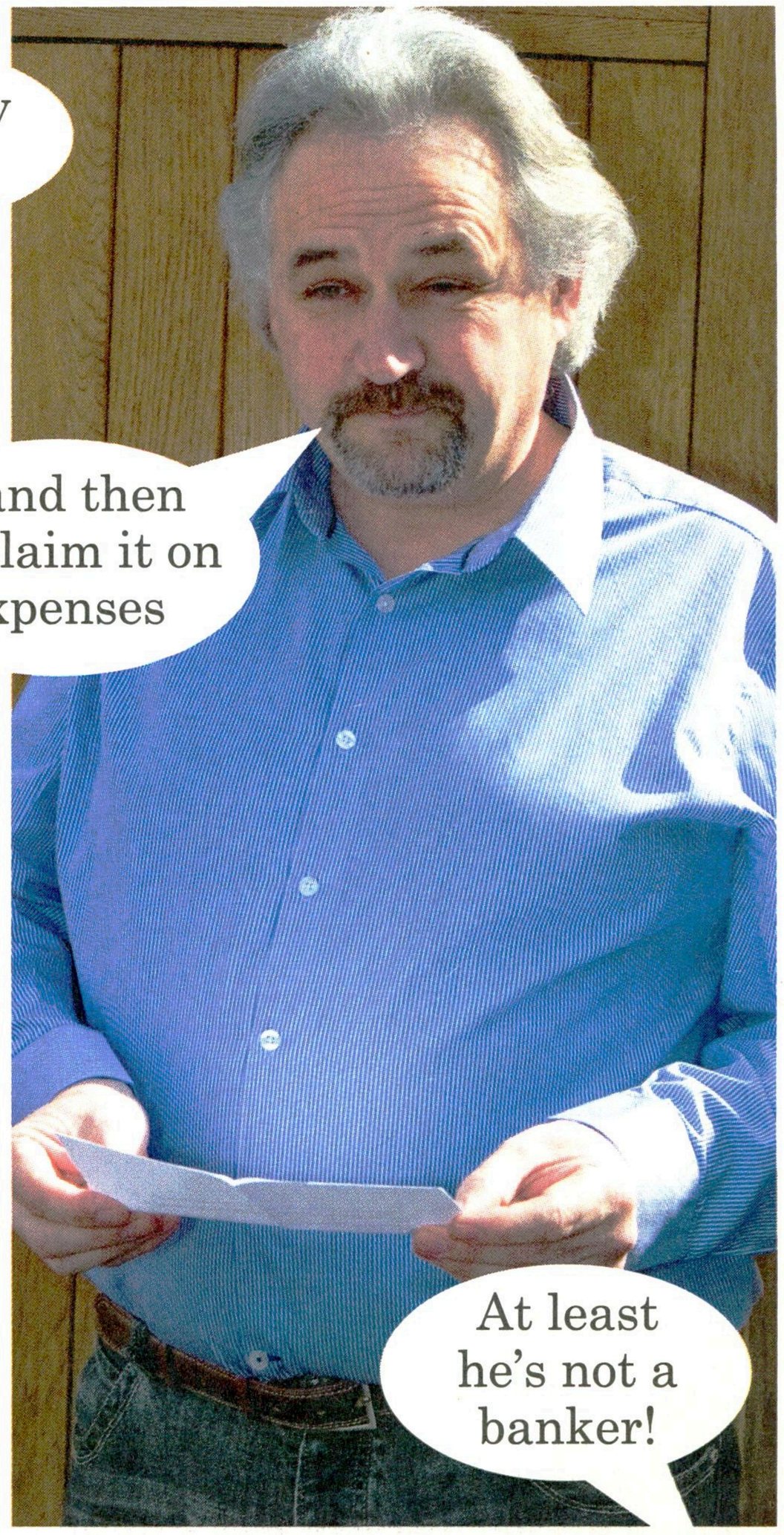
PRIVATE EYE

No. 1233
3 April –
16 April 2009
£1.50

MINISTER'S HUSBAND IN TV PORN SHAME



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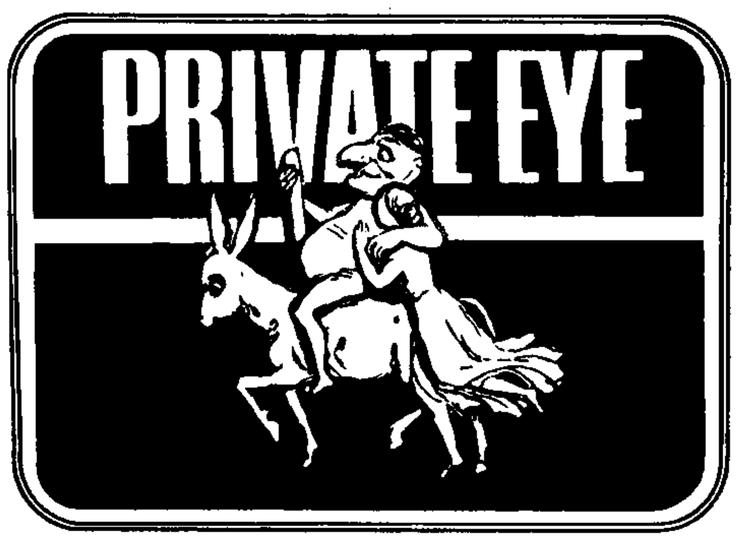

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ACCORDING to the *Mail on Sunday*'s front-page headline, Jacqui Smith's husband "watched pornographic films on accounts paid by taxpayer". But in the *Sunday Express*, which broke the story, he watched only "adult films". The P-word wasn't mentioned once in its three-page report.

Why no porn? Virgin Media's "adult" service, to which Richard Timney signed up, offers nine options, of which no fewer than five are owned by Richard "Dirty" Desmond – Television X, plus the four Red Hot channels "Raw", "Amateur", "40 Plus" and "Just 18" (whose delights include *Barely Legal Beauties*). So there's a better than even chance that the Home Secretary's husband was using viewing material supplied by the proprietor of the *Sunday Express*.

However, Dirty Des has always maintained that he isn't a pornographer and occasionally threatens to sue anyone who says otherwise. Being semi-literate, he believes that porn is synonymous with illegal obscenity. Thus it was that on the one weekend in living memory when his *Sunday Express* had a genuine scoop, the sub-editors couldn't give the story the showing it deserved, with traditional *Express* headlines linking the home secretary to porn and depravity.

By Monday, both the *Express* and *Daily Star* were still omitting to mention the connection between Dirty Des and Dirty Dick Timney. On the *Star* website, however, a video report on Jacqui Smith's latest disaster was inadvertently put just above a link to the site's most popular video – Amy Alexander of Television X displaying her bare bottom.

NUMBER CRUNCHING

£10 Amount Jacqui Smith admits erroneously putting on expenses for porn films, resulting in calls for her resignation

£135,600 Average amount MPs put on their expenses each year, on top of their £63,000 salaries

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PRIVATE EYE SUBSCRIPTIONS/SALES
PO Box 326, Sittingbourne, Kent ME9 8FA.
Subscription enquiries: 01795 414 871
Overseas: +44 (0) 1795 414 870 Fax: 01795 414 555.
Web: www.subsonline.co.uk
Email: private-eye@servicehelpline.co.uk

SUBSCRIPTION RATES
£28 per annum. Europe and Eire £34. Airmail (rest of world) £38.
Cheques/POs to Private Eye. Mastercard/Visa.

ADVERTISING
Ten Alps Publishing, 9 Savoy Street, London WC2E 7HR.
Email: private-eye@tenalpspublishing.com
Display: 020 7878 2366 **Classified:** 020 7240 9129

Published by Pressdram Ltd, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1D 3BN. **Printed** by BGP Ltd, Bicester OX6 7QZ. **Distributed** by COMAG Tavistock Road, West Drayton, Middlesex, UB7 7QE. Tel 01895 433600.

ABC

SPOT THE PROBLEM FOR A LABOUR PRIME MINISTER

Gordon Brown on Jade Goody: "She was a courageous woman both in life and death and the whole country have admired her determination to provide a bright future for her children."

Jade Goody on her children: "I know I'm ignorant but I'm going to make sure that my boys get the best education. I'm going to pay for their education for the rest of their lives because that'll give them the best chance in life."

NUMBER CRUNCHING

3hrs 20 mins Time it took Tony Blair to make public statement on death of Princess Diana

3hrs 35 mins Time it took Gordon "we're moving from this period when celebrity matters" Brown to make public statement on death of Jade Goody

"THE time that a jobseeker is expected to travel from his home to his place of employment has increased from one hour to one and a half hours each way."

So boasts the government of one of its recent crackdowns on the workshy under minister for employment and welfare reform, Tony McNulty. Anyone who turns down a position on the grounds that this is too far to commute will instantly lose their £60.50 Jobseekers Allowance.

The journey from Westminster to Mr McNulty's "constituency home" in Harrow takes around 45 minutes by tube. This is, however, sufficient for him to have been able to claim around £60,000 in "additional costs allowance" for the house, let his parents live there, and reside nine miles away in Hammersmith instead.

"Oh no! Someone's already wrecked the place"

GOOD to see the *Mail on Sunday* nailing those jingoistic hypocrites who proclaim their patriotism while dodging British taxes.

Latest to be turned over is betting firm Ladbrokes, whose advertising proclaims the company "as British as British beef". Yet, the *MoS* points out, it "saved millions of pounds last year by locating its online gambling operations, such as poker, offshore where it pays 1 percent tax".

Surely it can only be a matter of time before the *MoS* takes on a certain newspaper group which boasts the most British of values while owned by a non-domiciled proprietor through a Bermudan parent company and a series of trusts, saving millions in tax every year. The owner in question, as revealed in *Eye* 1231, is of course Lord Rothermere of the Daily Mail and General Trust.

NOBODY in government has a kind word to say about the Financial Services Authority these days as ministers try to pin the blame for the current crisis on regulatory cock-ups in Canary Wharf rather than policy failures in Westminster.

So what of the man who chaired the FSA from 2003, Sir Callum McCarthy, as the banks careered towards disaster under the regulator's watchful eye? Disgraced and out in the cold? Er, no. The moment he stepped down last September he was a made a non-executive director of… the Treasury!

THE sponsors of a city academy in Bristol have displayed impeccable judgement again in their choice of "partner" for the school.

Not content with taking money from cigarette manufacturer Imperial Tobacco for the sports hall (see *Eye* 1189), the Society of Merchant Venturers' has arranged for the Bank of Ireland (BoI) to "nurture a spirit of enterprise" at the Merchant's Academy school – teaching pupils "business skills such as decision making, communication and leadership".

Whoops! Last month the BoI needed a €3.5bn bail-out from the Irish government – not the sort of lesson the society was hoping for.

THERE was consternation at the RAF Club in Piccadilly a fortnight ago when a strangely familiar figure entered the hallowed halls.

It turns out that Sir Fred Goodwin (for it was he) was appointed by the Queen last April to a five-year term as the Honorary Air Commodore of 602 Squadron, RAAF, and is therefore eligible for club membership. Disgruntled members are already polishing their blackballs.

JUST FANCY THAT!

A CLOSE friend of Jacqui Smith told the *Guardian* her husband will probably be "sleeping on the sofa for a while". How fortuitous! On the list of items she has recently claimed for at her "second home" is one sofabed, £704.

Street Of Shame

"JADE'S JACK SELLS HIS STORY," the *Daily Star* screamed exclusively on its front page last Thursday. Jack Tweed, grieving husband of the People's Celeb, was "set to pocket a fortune" by revealing details of his life with tragic Jade.

Not a smart move, Dirty Des's mighty organ implied: "Pals are now warning Jack that it would not look too good if he is seen to be selling his story so soon after his wife's death."

So who would be indecorous enough to flash the cash at the young widower, regardless of how bad it looks? Could it be the same sensitive soul who published a memorial issue of *OK!* while Jade Goody was still alive, and whose *Scottish Sunday Express* has just been obliged to run a two-page apology for its grotesque "story" vilifying the young survivors of the Dunblane massacre?

It certainly could. Dirty Des has now bought the rights to Jack Tweed's tasteful memoir for *OK!* magazine.

MAX CLIFFORD has been at his pious best throughout Jade Goody's sorry end, but how much has the selfless soul made out of it?

As of last week, his share of the proceeds was £200,000.

HUMBUG SPECIAL

"The best suggestion of the past week about how to punish Sir Fred Goodwin is that he should be obliged to report personally at an RBS branch to collect his pension cheques. If customers do not lynch him, staff will… These bankers think they are above criticism and the lesson for us, the public, is that we need to get the boot in and keep kicking… This is why we must stand outside their homes throwing rocks through the windows." – Max Hastings, ***Daily Mail***, 21 March.

"Every decent Briton should recoil from the attack on Sir Fred's home and the car parked in his drive… But there's another ugly aspect to this affair. Shouldn't ministers examine their own consciences about the way they inflamed public feeling against Sir Fred?" – ***Daily Mail*** editorial, 26 March.

"Like everyone else, I am very happy to hate Sir Fred Goodwin, the former chief executive of the Royal Bank of Scotland. The mere sight of him is sickening. After a drink or two, I almost feel like killing him." – Stephen Glover, ***Daily Mail***, 19 March.

"The BBC, in conjunction with self-serving ministers, [built] up Fred the Shred into such a loathsome figure that no self-respecting revolutionary could have remained unmoved… Such grandstanding risks stirring the politics of envy and converting them into the politics of hatred and violence. Lay off the bankers. Stop exciting the mob." – Stephen Glover, ***Daily Mail***, 26 March.

DESPERATE times call for desperate measures. At the *Sunday Telegraph*, staff have been told to come up with "six goals" each for the coming year.

When this Birtist order generated much puzzlement, reporters were informed that a typical "goal" might be "getting a front page story". Even backroom staff and the paper's libel lawyers have been told to come up with "goals".

*"**In praise of… Paul Myners** Sometimes British public life has a way of creating pantomime dames out of real people. This seems to be the present fate of Paul Myners… He is a bit of a bruiser who collects modern art, especially anything with Cornish connections. It may well be that he dropped the ball on Sir Fred Goodwin's pension: then again, he had an entire banking system to prop up that week. Deft politician? Probably not, but that is not really his job. Anyone's fool? Er, no."*

– *Guardian* editorial, 19 March 2009

ODDLY enough, Myners was chairman of Guardian Media Group until last year. He also chaired the remuneration committee that awarded editor Alan Rusbridger a 15 percent pay rise, to £544,000, last year.

Days after this sucking up Myners answered for the government in a Lords debate on tax havens – a topic the *Guardian* has lately been shouting about from the rooftops. *Guardian*-endorsing Lib Dem peer Matthew Oakeshott described tax havens as "sunny places for shady people". Like, er, Lord Myners, perhaps, whose recent tax haven interests include a Bermudan insurance company and a couple of offshore hedge funds.

PS: Myners excused his Bermudan connection as the company in question was "advised throughout on tax matters by the reputable firm of KPMG". This would be the same reputable KPMG that advised firms such as Worldcom and Conrad Black's Hollinger on siphoning money offshore, paid a $450m fine for tax evasion not so long ago and has been behind several costly British tax avoidance schemes.

THE *Sunday Times* is the latest paper to have a go at Lord Myners, reporting last weekend how the minister in charge of the government's assault on tax havens "has used a blind trust to conceal £250,000 of his own money in an offshore shelter".

The paper added that "Myners has considerable expertise in offshore finance", pointing out his previous jobs for firms operating in Bermuda and Jersey – although this was hardly unknown.

The *Sunday Times*'s indignation at Myners' behaviour is presumably not shared by its proprietor, who has a good deal more than £250,000 of his money squirrelled away in offshore havens.

HOW can we fight the "evils poisoning young minds"? Esther Rantzen has the answer.

"My elder daughter is working as a teacher with children's charity Spirituality For Kids," she informs *Sunday Express* readers. "Its object is to give children the values they desperately need, to arm them when danger threatens and temptations crowd around them."

What she omits to mention is that Spirituality For Kids (SFK) is the children's wing of the Kabbalah Centre, the creepy cult backed by Madonna and Demi Moore. When her daughter Emily first became involved in Kabbalah, five years ago, Rantzen wrote a piece in the *Daily Mail* warning that "impressionable young people" could be abused and exploited by Kabbalah, which encourages them to shell out vast sums for bottles of bogus "healing water" and silly bracelets of red string. "Cults can separate children from families, friends from friends," she wailed.

Now Esther seems to have shed her misgivings and decided to promote Spirituality For Kids as a shield against, er, the exploitation of children. Shome mishtake? Alas not.

Many are semi-literate and write in text message style. However, we have to assume that an inability to spell is ALWAS due to dys-lexia.

Wales On Sunday

NUMBER CRUNCHING

6 tons Carbon dioxide emitted each year by a single Aga, against which *Guardian* is campaigning

17 tons Carbon dioxide emitted each year by a single car in Formula One, which *Guardian* is promoting with special supplement

LAST year, the *Grauniad* blew much of its remaining credibility with the green movement when it accepted £120,000 from oil giant Shell to be lead corporate sponsor for a "climate change summit" (*Eye* 1185). Shell was pleased with its bargain-priced piece of "greenwash", and both it and the paper shrugged off the protesters who picketed the venue.

Shell recently gave up all pretence at being green, pulling out out of research into renewable energy to concentrate on exploiting oil and tar sands, and, er increasing CO_2 emissions. Yet just two weeks ago the *Grauniad*'s marketing department was still seriously contemplating inviting Shell to sponsor this year's "summit" and asked the paper's team of environment hacks, including George Monbiot, John Vidal, Leo Hickman, Fred Pearce, David Adam and Juliette Jowitt, "how they would feel" if Shell was a sponsor this year. The explosive emissions which resulted are believed to have added considerably to global warming.

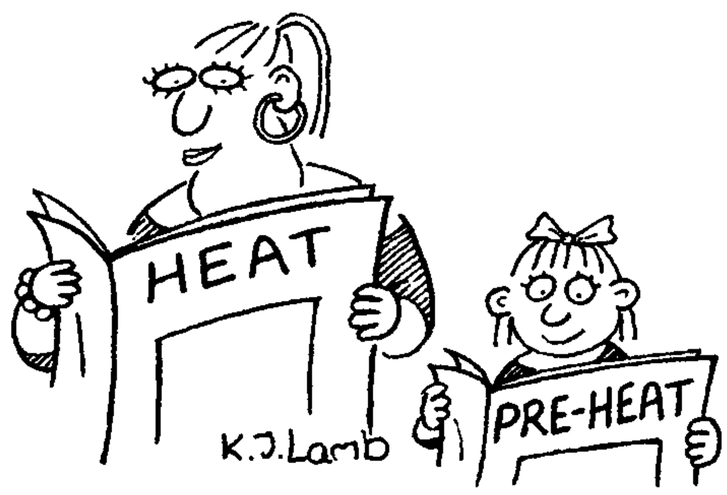
Undaunted, the *Grauniad*'s suits have come up with an equally embarrassing lead sponsor in E.ON – the German company which wants to build new coal-fired power stations and attracted 3,000 protesters to its Kingsnorth site last summer.

GOOGLE's new Street View really does offer a snapshot of Londoners going about their daily lives.

Even journalists can be spotted in their natural habitat – such as *Evening Standard* city hacks Nick Goodway and Bob Lea enjoying a liquid lunch outside the Elephant and Castle pub in Gordon Place, near their Kensington HQ!

THE *TIMES* has spent huge sums on a makeover and marketing campaign for its Saturday edition, cutting the cover price to £1 in the battle to narrow the gap with the rival *Telegraph*. Alas, so eager are *Times* executives to justify their efforts that they have been rather over-egging the Saturday brunch.

Last weekend the paper splashed on a big interview with George Soros, the billionaire speculator: "Soros: Britain May Need IMF Rescue". But even a cursory reading of what Soros actually told the paper was rather different – he thought an IMF bailout was "a possibility" but stressed that it "was not a likelihood". Deeply irritated by the *Times*'s headline, Soros promptly scampered round BBC studios on Saturday morning attacking the "misleading" and "sensationalist" newspaper.



GRIEF ENCOUNTERS

"IN CASES involving personal grief or shock, enquiries and approaches must be made with sympathy and discretion and publication handled sensitively," states the Press Complaints Commission code of practice. So how's that working out for the *Daily Mirror*?

It was one of only two papers (along with the *Mail*) to use photographs of David and Samantha Cameron returning from hospital after the death of their son Ivan on 26 February, to demonstrate the vital point that they were upset. On 20 March it managed a triple whammy of Natasha Richardson's relatives, with close-up shots of husband Liam Neeson, mother Vanessa Redgrave and sister Joely Richardson splashed across its front page so readers could make a thorough study of "their faces etched with grief". And on 24 March, two days after the death of Jade Goody, the paper and its rival the *Sun* decided to also break PCC clause 6 – "editors must not use the fame, notoriety or position of a parent or guardian as sole justification for publishing details of a child's private life" – by publishing large front-page photographs of her four and five-year-old sons along with full details of "their first day without their mum".

The last incident prompted the children's father Jeff Brazier – who was not party to the deals signed by Goody for magazine and television coverage of her illness – to request that the media allow them to "have some time away from the media spotlight to allow them to come to terms with the loss of their mother and have some family time alone and privacy. We would now like to respectfully ask that following the children's visit to Jade's home this afternoon, that photographers refrain from taking pictures of the children from 8pm this evening until further notice, or publishing pictures taken after this time which may be supplied by third parties."

Even the *Mirror* has managed has managed to comply so far – dispatching its snappers to follow Goody's mother to the undertakers to get some shots of her crying instead.

THE *Financial Times* received a back-handed compliment last Friday when G20 anti-capitalist protestors produced a spoof edition of the Pink 'Un which they handed out around central London. But that was nothing compared to the profoundly pink face of *FT* editor Lionel Barber over his own lead story that day.

In the first edition of Friday morning, the paper announced confidently: "Fears rise Barclays will need injection [of taxpayers' cash]." But after late-night calls between the *FT*, Barclays and the Financial Services Authority, a new headline appeared on the final edition: "Barclays' stress test signals no new funds." So even the venerable Pink 'Un can perform a reverse ferret when needs must.

"A SERIES of inflation busting pay rises for millions of public sector workers was given the green light yesterday – at a time when private firms are freezing wages and cutting jobs," stormed the *Daily Mail* on 25 March.

"The Government has agreed to honour increases of more than 2 percent a year until 2011."

Outrageous! Why, at the *Daily Mail* pay rises for executives have been capped at just, er, 3 percent. And last year editor Paul Dacre got a miserly 8 percent raise, taking his pay packet to a mere £1.62m.

"ONE DAY," threatened waffling *Guardian* hack Zoe Williams in her inevitable column about her latest pregnancy, "I will share my full and unabridged opinion on self-styled 'media doctors' who try to frighten fat preggers with bandying around of notions such as 'your weight gain may well end with a stillbirth'. In case I never get round to it, in précis, it is not a good opinion."

It is, however, the opinion expressed very forcefully to an overweight mother-to-be by her *Guardian* colleague Tom Smith in the "Doctor Doctor" advice column on 7 February, in which he begged her to "please take my answer seriously… please follow your midwife's advice".

HOW JOURNALISM WORKS

The splash: 25 March – *Daily Telegraph*'s front page is filled by enormous picture of fruity woman in swimming costume beneath headline "Sarkozy's New Minister". "Christine Kelly is as well-known for being pictured in bikinis as in trouser suits," the paper pants.

The denial: 25 March, 5.27pm – The Elysée palace "totally denies suggestions of an eventual appointment of Mrs Kelly to the government or to any type of mission."

The follow-up: 26 March: "Now the Elysée palace is blowing cold," notes the *Telegraph* website. "Be that as it may…" and we are off into an 1,100-word profile detailing Kelly's "passion for men in the shadows".

The analysis: 29 March "Ms Kelly, 39, was widely reported to be in the running for a ministerial position… One political journalist told the *Sunday Telegraph*: 'Nobody believed it could be true, but the Elysée took a long time to deny it'."

ORWELL PISSED

LAST week's announcement of the shortlist for the Orwell Prize, Britain's pre-eminent prize for political writing, was enlivened by a tired and emotional contribution from *Observer* columnist Nick Cohen.

Taking part in a debate on whether political parties have been ideologically bankrupted by the recession (short answer: yes), Cohen took the opportunity to castigate the liberal establishment for its failure to support Martin Bright, former political editor of the *New Statesman*.

Cohen alleged that Gordon Brown had helped to engineer Bright's sacking because of his attacks on Ken Livingstone during the London mayoral campaign last year. Bright had been on the Orwell longlist but was dropped last week, while the *Daily Mail* and *Mail on Sunday*'s Peter Oborne and Peter Hitchens – "utterly mediocre men who have never risked anything" – stayed on.

Warming to his theme, Cohen declared that "of all people" George Orwell would have revolted against Bright's dismissal, something that should have been recognised by the judges, including Ian Jack ("essentially a Stalinist"), Jenny Abramsky ("utterly appalling"), and Ferdinand Mount ("a Tory"). "Don't rob the grave of poor George Orwell," Cohen pleaded. "He would want nothing to do with people like you... people who always made prefects in school."

As the panel squirmed, and the audience prayed for more, Sean Maguire of Reuters attempted to suggest that this was all in the fine spirit of the prize, and that Peter Hitchens had done something similar the previous year. "Yes," boomed Hitchens from the floor, "but I was sober at the time."

In response to Hitchens' pompous protest that "I did think that I'd come here for the Orwell Prize, rather than the *Jeremy Kyle Show*", Cohen concluded: "I just despise you! How dare you? How dare you!" Orwell would have been proud indeed.

SUGGESTIONS that under his watch the *Telegraph* has moved downmarket or features anything, in his own words, "inappropriate", send editor thirsty Will Lewis apoplectic.

He will no doubt have been delighted that one of the *Telegraph* website's "most viewed" stories in the days following actress Natasha Richardson's skiing accident was "Natasha Richardson's knickers-out moment", a hot scoop from May 2008 about a wardrobe malfunction at a party which had left her displayed, in the paper's leering phrase, "in all her glory". It mysteriously disappeared from the rankings when, two days after the accident, the actress died.

HACKWATCH

Tom Bryant

ANOTHER brilliant exclusive from Tom Bryant, showbiz editor of the *Mirror*: "Jacko fury at IRA jibe."

An unnamed "source" tells him that Michael Jackson wants an apology from the BBC for a joke on *The Now Show* about the unwelcome return of "eighties celebrities" such as Jacko and Irish terrorists. Although some might find it hard to imagine the singer sitting in Beverly Hills listening to Radio 4 podcasts, Bryant's source assures him that "Michael was appalled".

Who is this source? Perhaps it's the one who provided some of Bryant's other recent scoops:

20 October 2008: "Madonna has vowed not to flee Britain for good despite the collapse of her marriage to Guy Ritchie," Bryant reveals. "The star, who was showing the strain of the split this weekend, was due to move to New York with her children. But a source said: 'The kids are happy in the UK. She has to be close to them'." Madonna duly moves to New York soon afterwards.

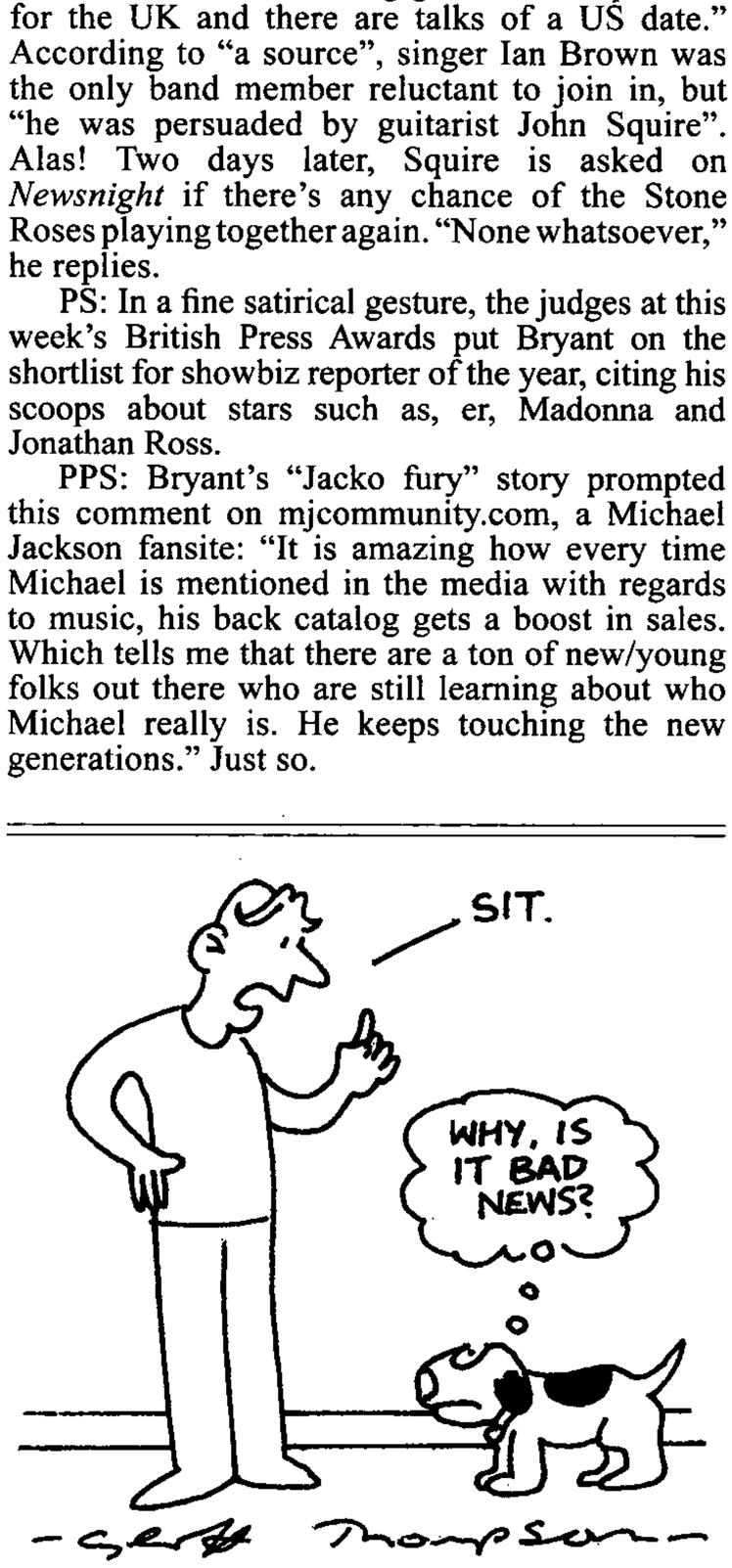
4 November: "EXCLUSIVE by Tom Bryant. Shamed Jonathan Ross will invite Andrew Sachs to be the first guest on his Friday night chat show when it returns. A source said: 'He believes that by having him on the show, he will draw a line under this whole sorry affair'." The guests on Ross's comeback show are in fact Tom Cruise, Stephen Fry and Lee Evans.

31 January 2009: "EXCLUSIVE… Noel Edmonds' *House Party* is set to return to the BBC – and Mr Blobby will be back too," Bryant informs *Mirror* readers. "Edmonds has been sounded out about a one-off special by Beeb bosses. And a source close to the talks said if negotiations go well a Saturday night series could be in the offing." Two months on, nothing more has been heard of it.

17 March: "EXCLUSIVE… Madchester's finest The Stone Roses are re-forming for a summer tour. At least 21 gigs have been planned for the UK and there are talks of a US date." According to "a source", singer Ian Brown was the only band member reluctant to join in, but "he was persuaded by guitarist John Squire". Alas! Two days later, Squire is asked on *Newsnight* if there's any chance of the Stone Roses playing together again. "None whatsoever," he replies.

PS: In a fine satirical gesture, the judges at this week's British Press Awards put Bryant on the shortlist for showbiz reporter of the year, citing his scoops about stars such as, er, Madonna and Jonathan Ross.

PPS: Bryant's "Jacko fury" story prompted this comment on mjcommunity.com, a Michael Jackson fansite: "It is amazing how every time Michael is mentioned in the media with regards to music, his back catalog gets a boost in sales. Which tells me that there are a ton of new/young folks out there who are still learning about who Michael really is. He keeps touching the new generations." Just so.



BANNED AID

"NOW LET me say that while others may be tempted to shy away from their development responsibilities, we in Britain will continue to meet them and we will keep our promises on aid," promised Gordon Brown ahead of the G20, echoing a commitment at last July's G8 Tokyo summit to put food security for the poorest countries at the top of the agenda.

How strange, then, that minutes of the Department for International Development's management committee just seven months later, on 17 February, discussing how to deal with imminent cutbacks for 2009-10, showed that "agriculture and food security" programmes would be given a "lower priority". The minutes also curiously suggested that spending plans coming out of the G20 summit should be classified as capital, not day-to-day, spending.

As soon as the *Eye* queried these odd, ahem, developments, the department that encourages scrutiny of other governments removed the embarrassing comments from its website. In their place is the following testament to open government: "This was an internal departmental discussion. The papers are restricted."

NUMBER CRUNCHING

308 Years of royal tradition which Gordon Brown is considering overturning with changes to laws of succession

15 Years since Gordon Brown ensured his own succession to the role of Prime Minister, to which he is unelected

STUNNING FAILURE

THE MET's armed response teams were due to carry taser stun guns while policing protests during the G20 summit – but even that couldn't boost demand for home secretary Jacqui Smith's great taser giveaway, which has been a flop.

The Home Office announced in March that "police forces are to receive over 6,000 new tasers" – which sounded impressive until you recall that Smith announced £8m for *10,000* tasers last November, as a step towards giving the electric shock gadgets to ordinary frontline police and not just to trained firearms officers.

That announcement caused dismay among such unlikely allies as Amnesty International and the Metropolitan Police Authority, who argued that putting thousands of the devices on the streets in the hands of ordinary coppers would increase public fear. Although it is the biggest police force, the Met requested just 150 tasers from the fund and it only gives the gizmo to firearms and Territorial Support teams.

Smith told *Police Review* magazine that every force had received all the tasers they had asked for. They also got extra funds for training and ammunition, which were belatedly tacked on to the original offer to make it more appealing. Therefore, almost 4,000 tasers went unclaimed – revealing that even those forces that publicly welcomed the scheme weren't actually all that keen on obtaining the kit.

With the death of an unarmed 15-year-old who was tasered in the US last week, adding to the toll of people killed or harmed by these "safer" weapons, who can blame them?

CALLED TO ORDURE

HOW irritating ombudsmen and select committees can be, making life irksome for government ministers who want to sweep a scandal under the Whitehall linoleum.

That certainly seems to be Treasury minister Ian Pearson's attitude to the Equitable Life affair, anyway. The government's role (or lack of a role) in regulating failed savings company Equitable has been sharply criticised not only by the parliamentary ombudsman but also by a committee of MPs. Pearson's response, as the relevant minister? To lose his temper and say they didn't know what they were talking about.

One of life's middlers, Pearson is both a trade and a treasury minister. He has the misfortune to be Lord Mandelson's representative in the Commons. What with that and the Equitable Life disaster on his plate, he is perhaps understandably stressed.

Pearson used to be regarded as an affable Brummie, blessed with the sort of wavy, thick, combed back hair once favoured by 1960s matinee actors and a certain bluff charm to match. His behaviour at the despatch box during Treasury questions the other day, alas, was less appealing.

A meek Lib Dem, Annette Brooke (Mid Dorset), asked how the government was getting on with agreeing compensation for Equitable Life policyholders. Some have been left near-destitute by the company's mismanagement, lack of official supervision and subsequent implosion in 2000. The government's latest response is to suggest that something might be decided next summer.

Brooke, who often looks as though a lion might gobble her up at any minute, warbled that the government's position had been described as "shabby, constitutionally devious and procedurally improper". The Commons public administration committee also said there was "a very clear case for compensation where the state has caused injustice" and detected a "gaping black hole" in Whitehall's response.

Hearing Brooke, Pearson snapped. Perhaps he thought the fragile Lib Dem could be easily crushed. Perhaps he was simply in a scratchy mood (it was earlyish on a Thursday morning). He spat out his contempt for the public admin committee, saying he was "very disappointed" – Whitehall code for "mighty pissed off". The committee itself has said how "deeply disappointed" it was by Pearson's department. The insult obviously stung.

Pearson added that the committee's description of the government's behaviour had been "unjustifiable and irresponsible". He piously said the government had a duty not to hand out compensation without thinking long and hard. How refreshing to hear such parsimony from one of Gordon Brown's ministers.

The Commons went bananas, opposition MPs saying Pearson was "out of order". Mr Speaker: "Nooo, he's not." Tory harrumpher Sir Patrick Cormack (S Staffs) called Pearson's remarks "one of the most shameful statements to have been made from that despatch box for many years". He said Pearson had just "rubbished" a Labour-run committee and noted that the Labour MPs sitting behind the minister were horrified. True. Labour backbenchers were looking dead glum and refusing to leap to their hind legs to support Pearson.

The minister was by now blushing and licking his lips nervously. He struggled to keep his voice on an even keel. Yet he repeated that he was "very disappointed indeed" that the government had been criticised. The committee did "not appear to understand some of the arguments".

Mark Field (Con, London and Westminster) suggested that the government was taking as long as possible to compensate Equitable victims so that many of them would "die before there is any chance of getting any money".

With a forest of Tories now trying to intervene, Speaker Martin made a weird ruling that members could not debate Pearson's remarks. Instead they had to stick to the strict contents of Brooke's original question, which had been about a review of the Equitable affair. Batty. Pearson had just, in effect, challenged the whole standing of the select committee reporting system. Yet MPs could not treat this as part of the flow of the debate. He really is the most staggeringly bad Speaker.

Pearson, who was later accused by the normally mild-mannered Sir George Young (Con, NW Hants) of "declaring war on parliament", was starting to realise he had dropped a major bollock. He toned down his rhetoric, describing his disagreement with the public admin committee was "a technical dispute" and saying he had "every sympathy" for Equitable policyholders who have suffered genuine losses".

If that is so, why not accept the verdicts of two outside bodies and get your arse in gear, chum? Before yet more policyholders go to paupers' graves.

'Gavel Basher'

Obamaballs

"Here at Getwine we believe in Barack Obama's words, Yes we can! Why, you ask? Can Getwine reduce the incredibly low prices of their wines even further? Yes we can! Can Getwine create, print and dispatch personalised wine labels within 48 hours? Yes we can!"

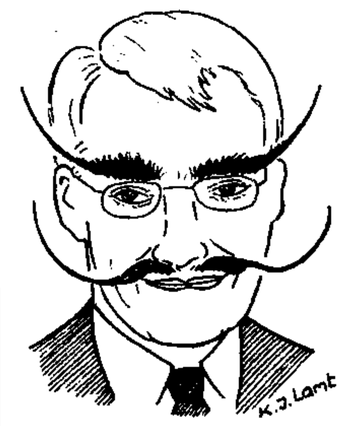
– Email from Getwine, South Africa

DRAPER'S RECORD

HAVING been disgraced in the Lobbygate scandal of the late 1990s, Mandelsonian apparatchik Derek "Dolly" Draper went off to California and retrained as a psychotherapist. He was short of money at the time, but happily he was able to borrow £5,000 from his chum James Macintyre, the young hack who has since become political correspondent of the *New Statesman*.

Now Draper has tiptoed back into politics, running the pisspoor Labourlist website – known to the cognoscenti as Labourlost – when not basking in the glory of being married to TV presenter Kate Garraway. And recently he had a chance to repay the favour when environment secretary Ed Miliband wondered if he should hire Macintyre as his special adviser. Miliband asked Dolly's opinion.

No, said Draper, don't hire Macintyre: he's not a sufficiently slavish Labour loyalist. Clearly the going rate for a "new" Labour backscratch is now rather more than five thousand quid.



The Surreal Economy by Alistair Dali

ELECTIVE SURGERY

BURIED in the smallprint of the Political Parties and Elections Bill is a huge and unexpected concession from the Labour government. For years it has been debasing the electoral process by making it as easy as possible for the fraudulent to get postal votes. Now it seems to have had a Damascene conversion.

As conventional wisdom runs that the larger the turnout the better Labour does, the party has thrown away safeguards and debauched the ballot as it tried to pull in as many voters as possible. In 2005, the electoral commissioner Richard Mawrey QC ruled that Birmingham had a system that was "wide open to fraud". Upholding claims from the Liberal Democrats that Labour activists were using postal votes to rig an election, he declared that "short of writing 'Steal Me' on the envelopes, it is hard to see what more could be done to ensure their coming into the wrong hands."

Last year in Slough, a special election court convicted Tory councillor Eshaq Khan of using bogus postal votes to beat Lydia Simmons, a former mayor of Slough, by 119 votes to win the council's central ward. Sir Christopher Kelly, chairman of the Committee on Standards in Public Life, said the Slough fraud highlighted the need for fundamental changes.

"Electoral fraud is not a trivial matter – it is an affront to the democratic principle of one person one vote," he said. "Left unchecked, it will eventually undermine trust and confidence in the democratic process and by implication the electorate's consent to the outcome of elections."

The government seemed to have no interest in changing a system that suited its interests. Until March, that is, when without warning it agreed to the demands of Sir Christopher, the Electoral Commission and every other independent observer for reform. The present system is a joy for gerrymanderers and bullying men who want to make sure their wives and grown-up children vote the way they want.

In future, people will not be able to apply for a fistful of ballots on behalf of others. Individuals will have to take personal responsibility for registering and provide evidence that returning officers can check that they are who they say they are.

There's only one snag. The new, clean system will not be in place until 2014, or maybe later. The last possible date of the next general election is 3 June 2010. Like St Augustine, Labour wants to be pure – but not yet!

Meanwhile, back in the real world, polling experts are looking with horror at the explosion of under-regulated postal voting that Gordon Brown will allow as he tries to hold on to power. What was once a small part of the electoral process is now a big business. Labour has created a company based in Londonderry, the illiterately titled Opt2Vote Ltd, which boasts that it "specialises in designing and delivering a range of solutions to address the changing needs of the UK electoral services market". In three years it has dealt with a staggering 10m postal votes.

Mike Smithson, the polling guru who runs the website politicalbetting.com, told the *Eye* that the fact that postal votes were now a money-making opportunity showed that Labour had created a system beyond the control of returning officers. There were too many postal votes for them to cope with.

"Returning officers and their staff have local knowledge," he said. "If 10 people register at a terraced house they know can only sleep three, they will be suspicious. How can a company based in Londonderry spot potential frauds?"

To which the answer is that Labour does not want the ballot processors in Northern Ireland to spot potential frauds, not at least until the next election is safely out of the way.

'Ratbiter'

ECO-GNOMICS

Dave's green with ennui

DAVID CAMERON's commitment to the environment was a central theme in the early months of his leadership. But with his Quality of Life taskforce, led by John Gummer and Zac Goldsmith, consigned to the filing cabinet long ago, how is the Tories' green rhetoric faring in practice? The latest signs aren't encouraging.

The leader's recent reshuffle did little to endear the Tories to the green campaigning groups who had started to give the party the benefit of the doubt on climate change.

First, Peter Ainsworth, a long-standing green champion well liked by environmental campaigners of all political persuasions, was bypassed in October for the job of shadowing the newly-created Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) in favour of Greg Clark, a former Conservative Research Department boss.

Apart from this being a disappointment to Ainsworth (who was left in the shadow cabinet to cover the less prominent dregs of Defra like floods, fishing and waste), it also caused frustration to the hugely ambitious Greg Barker, whose friendship with Cameron and environmental interests might have led him to assume *he* was heading for the climate role. Wrong Greg: Barker was offered a junior post instead.

Then in January Cameron sacked Ainsworth from the shadow cabinet altogether in the wider reshuffle, replacing him with the novice Nick Herbert, an MP not known to have expressed any interest in green issues. It seems Tory PR "supremo" Andy Coulson, having decided Ainsworth wasn't getting his name in the papers enough, was unaware of the importance of the shadow spokesman having the ear of the green movement, which Ainsworth has enjoyed for many years. Thus the Tories made the same blunder as "new" Labour, opting for policy by headline over substance.

The chorus of green disapproval is growing. Having spent months advising the Tories on their manifesto, several NGO leaders now fear the Conservatives are back to square one: stuck between the patrician old guard who believe environmental conservation is basically about hunting and fishing, and a band of young right-wing populists who think it has no place in the party's electoral fortunes during a recession. To make matters worse, London mayor Boris Johnson has shown virtually no understanding of the topic at all. Great progress, Dave!

BRUSSELS SPROUTS

OLAF, the EU's in-house inquisition (officially the anti-fraud department), continues to carry the torch for EU-style justice. It has just been slammed by the EU ombudsman for trashing the career of a British consultant by spreading unsubstantiated allegations among his clients.

The consultant, Gavin Jones, worked on complicated EU "technical assistance" projects in countries from Albania to Papua New Guinea. In 2006 he learned that OLAF was circulating letters to his employers, stating that "elements suggest that [Jones had] committed serious irregularities". There were numerous follow-up letters and interviews of "witnesses". Jones's name was blackened, clients dropped him, and his work on anything vaguely European ended.

OLAF's investigative frenzy has led to, er, not very much. At the end of last year, a file was passed to the "competent authorities" in Britain, but Jones has heard nothing more. Olaf won't even say who those "competent authorities" are; and Jones's latest letter to OLAF has gone unanswered, despite a six-week deadline.

What irks Jones and the EU ombudsman is the way the investigation has been conducted. OLAF has refused to detail any allegations against Jones, has presumed him guilty, has provided no evidence to support any claims of irregularities, has not answered letters and has provided nothing that would enable Jones to mount a defence.

The ombudsman's view is unequivocal. OLAF "did not comply with the principle of fairness, the principle of impartiality and the principle of the presumption of innocence". Nor did it "justify its refusal to provide the complainant with information on the allegations against him".

OLAF has not even responded to this criticism from the ombudsman and seems to have learnt nothing from its scandalous hounding of German reporter Hans-Martin Tillack (*Eyes passim*), for which it also refused to apologise despite court judgements in favour of Tillack. Jones says he will seek legal redress. But will OLAF change its ways? Don't hold your breath.

IN a further blow against justice, EU leaders and MEPs ignored widespread warnings of abuse of human and civil rights by European legal associations when they endorsed a proposal for trials in absentia, the eurosceptic think-tank Open Europe has revealed.

The decision to allow all suspects to be tried and convicted without their knowledge was approved by Jack Straw, the UK justice secretary, and his EU counterparts last year, even though the proposal contravenes basic human rights to a fair trial and undermines every single British legal safeguard as far back as the 1679 Habeas Corpus Act.

Shamefully the British government also pushed through the European Arrest Warrant without proper debate (*Eyes passim*), resulting in such controversial extradition cases as that of British student Andrew Symeou (*Eye* 1223) who faces highly contentious manslaughter charges in Greece.

The civil liberties organisation Statewatch has even obtained evidence of an extradition demanded over the theft of two tyres. A British magistrate has also warned against two other framework decisions, which would allow even those convicted of a parking offence abroad to be extradited, with the risk of having their property confiscated at home.

Not that this will concern the European Council, which will give its final "approval" in three months' time, or the commission – or even those cocooned MEPs who are elected to represent EU taxpayers but seem to turn a blind eye to everything except their next pay cheque.

"The groom wants it to be known that these are aspirations and not commitments..."

ITV

The Apprentice (BBC1)
Clough (ITV1)

ONE of the ways in which TV criticism can be unfair is the working assumption that every project is made in perfect conditions: with unlimited budget, a free choice of personnel and infinite time to get things right. But most TV programmes are a botch in which the creative ambitions are limited by logistics or external elements. Last week's big peak-time factual programmes were desperate examples of nifty footwork to get round production difficulties.

At a time when many pleasant and blameless people are discovering they no longer have a job, it probably isn't the moment to be putting out a show in which a pack of monstrously egotistical wannabe celebrities compete to earn £100,000 a year. The property shows – those other TV victims of the new social mood – are quietly being downgraded in the schedule, but **The Apprentice** is one of BBC1's best-selling lines and so has to be kept going, no matter what happens.

One sign of the times was that, for the first time, the narrator didn't put a value on Sir Alan's property empire, merely describing it as successful. And the show suffered another early blow by being forced to begin with unequal teams after the sudden withdrawal of a team member identified only as "matey". Viewers might have thought it would be fun to see the moment when Sugar was told a competitor had fired himself before it all started – and even to hear from the escapee himself – but, bizarrely, there was just the one coded reference. Presumably one of the BBC's many arse-covering executives had decided the drop-out must be permitted his privacy.

During the first edition, the show's strategy for surviving the recession rapidly became clear. Even in the good times, the show benefited from whipping up class and status resentment against the slappers and barrow boys aiming to make it on to Sir Alan's payroll. But, for reasons of dramatic tension, there were also a few likeable figures as well, for whom viewers might reasonably root. This time, though, every single contestant is repulsive, presumably in the hope that the audience will enjoy hating them as proxies for Sir Fred Goodwin and the other bankers. Perhaps the trick up the series' sleeve is that, at the end of this one, Sir Alan will announce that none of them deserves a job and give the hundred thousand grand to charity.

Even so, it is not certain that this would be enough to save the franchise. Sugar's put-downs feel ever more contrived, a feeling underlined by his increasing tendency to stumble on the punchlines. Over on ITV1, **Clough** was another example of a show with bruise marks visible all over it. What ITV likes to do is to make big jolly documentaries timed to coincide with big film releases: it's a cheap way of getting some stars on screen and the producers might be pleased enough at all this free publicity to buy some paid adverts for the film elsewhere in the schedule.

So the release of *The Damned United*, based on David Peace's novel about Brian Clough's disastrous spell of manager of Leeds United, was a good opportunity for a doc featuring interviews with famous footballers and using lots of ITV's own archive of Clough in action as a pundit. But the problem was that Brian's widow and children and the surviving members of the Leeds team disapprove of book and film and were only interested in taking part in a "spoiler".

The result was a film which kept fighting with itself, two quite different strands of narrative intermittently scrapping like Kevin Keegan and Billy Bremner in the notorious Charity Shield final which was the first Leeds game Clough lost. So half the programme was an observational documentary about the Clough family: attending the unveiling of a statue to the gaffer in Nottingham, Nigel Clough taking over as boss at Derby County, one of his dad's old clubs. Between these scenes, widow Barbara or Nigel – or Leeds midfield supremo Johnny Giles – would pop up to say how terrible David Peace's book is.

Interestingly, though, none of them criticised the film, which Giles even seemed to suggest might be fine. This was probably because it was so deeply against both the journalistic and commercial instincts of ITV to give 75 minutes of peak time to persuading people not to see a new movie which its distributors would almost certainly be wishing to advertise on television. And so, between the family sections, there were long extracts from the most dramatic and amusing sections of the film.

Even more oddly, the doc dealt in detail with two aspects of Clough's life – his alcoholism and his un-tender attitude towards Nigel in his playing days – which the film never mentions. It would be interesting to know how the Cloughs now feel about taking part in an interested spoiler which contains more hostile material than the movie they were targeting and which also serves as extended trailer for the film.

If a footballer had footwork as nippy as this documentary, he'd have gone straight into any of Clough's teams. Whether *The Apprentice* can stay on its feet during the recession remains to be seen.

'Remote Controller'

MEDIA NEWS

BBC director-general Mark Thompson won favourable headlines last week when he announced that the pay of some of the corporation's stars would be slashed as part of a "painful" £400m cuts package agreed by the BBC Trust.

But this still avoids questions about why the Beeb has come to have such a black hole in its finances, and how the brunt of any financial hardship to come will be borne by less exalted employees.

Management had banked on partly funding expensive future projects – in particular the move to Salford and the return of some departments to the newly refurbished Broadcasting House – by flogging off the BBC's vermin-infested Television Centre in White City.

Calculations were based on the opening of the new Westfield shopping complex nearby, the vastly improved transport links to the area and, er, the soaraway property values of 2006. Now Thompson will be lucky to sell the site at all, leaving him – or rather his staff – with a major headache. The decline of sterling has added to the Beeb's financial woes, sending the cost of running foreign bureaux sky-high.

Under Thompson thousands of staff have already been shown the door. Bearing the brunt this time will be the Beeb's newsgathering department, which employs rank-and-file radio and TV hacks, where up to 150 jobs could go.

Managers, whose own numbers multiply midge-like in times of crisis, are engaging in one of their favourite activities – drawing up lists of reporters for the chop. Already the names of unpopular (ie "expensive") correspondents are being bandied around the bars of White City.

Watch this space – after all, it soon won't be any use watching the BBC.

DUMB BRITAIN

Weakest Link (BBC1)

Anne Robinson: Audio tapes found in 2008 at the former home of the crime writer Agatha Christie revealed that her grandmother was the inspiration behind which of her fictional detectives?

Contestant: Poirot.

AR: What type of cat is renowned for never changing its spots?

Contestant: Cheshire.

AR: What surname is shared by a jazz pianist called Scott and a rock singer called Janis?

Contestant: Street-Porter.

AR: Which "U" is a South American country whose capital city is Montevideo?

Contestant: Uganda.

LUVVIES

"*The Pianist* was very close to Roman Polanski's heart, so the cast and crew were all desperate to get it right. I will never forget the attention he paid to detail. He didn't like the hat I wore for a scene, so we had to go back to Warsaw and reshoot. But I felt like a groupie with a rock band. I was in awe of him and listened to every word he said – if he had said jump off a cliff, I would have done it."

EMILIA FOX,
The Times Magazine

Submitted by M. Gorman.

An occasional column devoted to gems from the acting profession. £10 paid for entries.

O·B·N

"He's a really good interviewer. There's a reason why Jonathan Ross is as valued as he is, because, you know what, he's really bloody good at something it's difficult to be good at."

KIRSTY YOUNG on
Jonathan Ross, *The Observer*

Submitted by Iain MacIsaac

£10 paid for entries put forward for the Order of the Brown Nose.

"Old!"

MANAGEMENT preparations for the new round of strikes at the BBC got off to a poor start with an email to staff from Helen Boaden, head of news.

"Twenty-nine percent of NUJ members voted [in the ballot]," she wrote, "77% of whom voted for strike action." In fact the turnout was 38 percent, and a groveling "correction" followed.

Boaden added a note about attendance. "Leave that has already been booked will be honoured – however, any new requests will not be accepted," she noted, hoping to forestall the tradition of hacks taking a day's holiday to avoid crossing a picket line. A number of staff who had booked flights (but not their time off) long before the strike was called lost their money.

Worse, even while managers were negotiating with the NUJ about the possible "outsourcing" of jobs in the World Service South Asia Bureau – a major point of contention at Bush House, where hacks fear that editorial independence will be compromised – it emerged that the BBC had secretly gone ahead with its plans anyway. Sixteen staff from the bureau will go, their jobs moving to Pakistan and India – neither noted for their tolerance of a free media.

Some South East Asia staff have been called several times by managers hoping to persuade them to accept "voluntary" redundancy packages or face the axe.

RADIO 4 controller Mark Damazer was clear why the time had come to cancel children's programme *Go4It*: "Over a long period it's been horribly clear that we are making a perfectly good programme – but for an adult audience. The average age of the audience is in the 50s."

The same, of course, was true of Russell Brand's Saturday night show on Radio 2, but his purported appeal to a young audience was cited by the BBC both as the reason for his employment at the station and as a defence for his behaviour prior to his resignation. And his programme cost the BBC a lot more than *Go4It*.

LAST October, BBC head of "vision" Jana Bennett announced an ambitious new scheme called "Out Of London", which would "address a persistent imbalance between London and the rest of the UK" by ensuring that half of all programming was made outside the capital.

Last week the first major move was confirmed, one which Bennett described as a "key part of our thinking". From 2011 long-running drama series *Casualty* will move to Cardiff. From, er, Bristol.

HURRY, hurry! There's still time to submit your proposal for a documentary to BBC Radio 1 before the commissioning round closes on 8 April, and all ideas that might appeal to their "restless" and "scenester" audience are welcome. But whatever you do, don't call it a documentary.

"All documentaries must be journalistically sound with an intelligent approach to the subject matter," reads the latest commissioning brief from executive producer Joe Harland. However, "the audience were not connecting with the term 'documentaries', so in order that this valuable content reaches the largest audience possible, we have moved to the term 'stories'. This has already met with success as programmes such as *The Story of the Killers*, *The Story of the Ting Tings* and *The Story of Manorexia* have received greater talk-up on air and been received more positively."

Good news, though: listeners to 1Extra – who tend to be younger and from "the most difficult to reach audiences within the BBC… more than half a million fans of new black music" – *are* thought to be able to cope with the term "documentary" without switching off.

BIRTSPEAK 2.0

"A SAFE walkway through the project site is now available using the previous inner circulation route" – *BBC Facilites notice saying the main doors at White City are open again*

ELISABETH Murdoch's TV production company continues to flourish, according to trade magazine *Broadcast*. Her firm Shine Reveille has just secured the international distribution rights to *No Show*, a British comedy made by the FX cable channel, part of Fox International.

As *Broadcast* reports, the deal "reinforces Fox International Channels' relationship with Shine Reveille, following the pair's signing of first-look output deals for scripted and unscripted programming in Eastern Europe, Greece, Turkey and Portugal". But the trade mag is too diplomatic to mention one important "relationship" which might explain why Fox International is so friendly with Shine. Fox is owned by one R Murdoch – or, as Elisabeth calls him, Daddy.

AD NAUSEAM

ADVERTISING is having a torrid time in the economic downturn. But one notable advertiser – the UK government – is still spending like there's no tomorrow, upping its spend last year by more than any commercial company.

The Central Office of Information (COI), which handles government campaigns, is now the UK's second biggest advertiser, on £178.1m. If this seems surprising, it's been noted in these pages before how government ad-spend increases in the years leading up to an election.

Though no one in the COI will admit it, government information programmes of every hue have the cumulative effect of making it look as if our elected leaders are actually doing something. With an election due by next year, expect the government to become the UK's biggest advertiser in 2009.

CELEBRITY CHARITY

PR man of the moment Max Clifford delivered a dose of reality to a recent feature on celebrity charity endorsements in trade mag *Professional Fundraising*.

"Most stars are only interested in themselves, whether the public realise that or not," he said. "In a perfect world they would do the right thing for the right reasons; but to me it is more important that the charity gets the help and benefit that it needs and merits and deserves, even if the star isn't doing it for the right reasons."

So cynical! But is this true in every case? No. "Clifford does note there are exceptions," the magazine reported. "Namely Simon Cowell and Mohammed Al Fayed, who he says give substantial amounts of money and time to charity without seeking publicity for such deeds."

By an astonishing coincidence, both Cowell and Fayed are Clifford clients. Will the bashful duo ever be able to forgive him for inadvertently drawing attention to their generosity?

WORLD OF SPIN

"FINSBURY'S professionalism and innovative approach to financial and political communications has ensured it has led the industry since its formation in 1994." So boasts Finsbury, the PR firm run by Peter Mandelson's great friend Roland Rudd. In practice, however, its innovative approach to professionalism can look strangely like the oldest PR trick of all – bare-faced deception.

That, at least, appears to be the policy of Rudd's partner Andrew Mitchell in his dealings with author Tom Bower, who is writing a book about the oil business that will include references to Finsbury's client Vitol, the secretive and crooked Swiss-based oil trader. (In November 2007 Vitol was fined $17m for "grand larceny in the first degree", after admitting that it paid $13m in illegal surcharges to Saddam Hussein's government to facilitate deals under the oil-for food programme.)

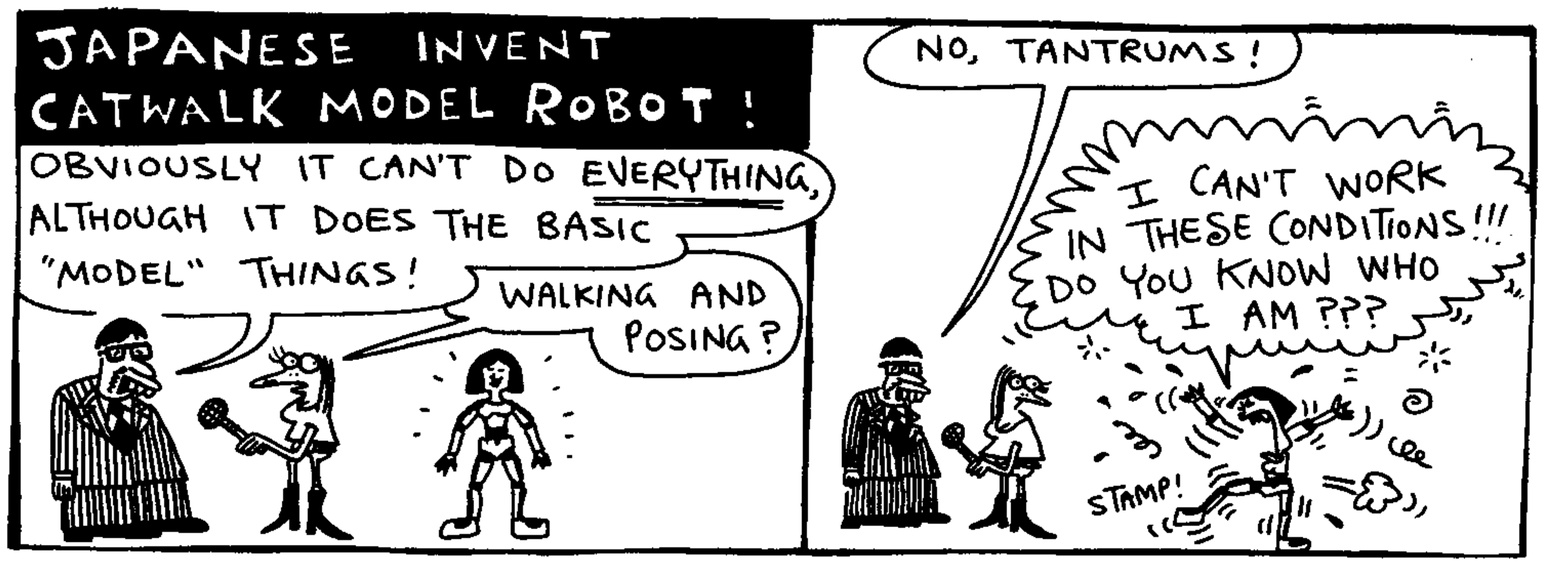
Assuring Bower that he was eager to help, Mitchell asked him for a list of allegations to which he required answers. This was, Mitchell promised, a genuine attempt to be helpful and emphatically *not* a legal fishing expedition: Vitol wouldn't unleash its lawyers if Bower outlined his areas of interest. "They are going to engage with you," he cooed reassuringly.

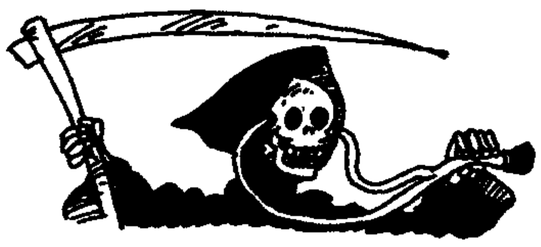
A week later the form of this engagement became apparent: a threatening four-page letter to Bower from Schilling's, London's most sabre-toothed solicitors, accusing him of asking "grossly defamatory" questions.

Meanwhile, Bower has also had a threatening letter from Schillings on behalf of former BP boss Lord Browne, another man who is advised by Finsbury and Roland Rudd. Most innovative!

SUPERMODELS

KERBER


JAPANESE INVENT CATWALK MODEL ROBOT!
OBVIOUSLY IT CAN'T DO EVERYTHING, ALTHOUGH IT DOES THE BASIC "MODEL" THINGS!
WALKING AND POSING?
NO, TANTRUMS!
I CAN'T WORK IN THESE CONDITIONS!!! DO YOU KNOW WHO I AM???
STAMP!



MEDICINE BALLS

Staffs shortage

"THE culture of the future must be a culture of safety and of quality; a culture of openness and accountability: a culture of public service." So concluded the Bristol Royal Infirmary Inquiry in July 2001.

Of the inquiry's 198 recommendations, very few seem to have been implemented at Mid-Staffordshire Foundation Trust, where as many as 1,200 patients may have died due to poor emergency treatment. Health secretary Alan Johnson has ordered an inquiry going back to 2002, when the problems seem to have started. So why did it take the Healthcare Commission (HC) until 2009 to publicise such "shockingly poor care"?

In 1992, when the *Eye* exposed the Bristol scandal, the Conservative government awarded Bristol Royal Infirmary its Charter Mark for Excellence, despite the appalling mortality rates for child heart surgery. Likewise, Mid-Staffs reached the pinnacle of New Labour achievement – foundation trust status – despite the corporate manslaughter of hundreds of patients. Labour has played lip service to the Bristol Inquiry, creating an NHS obsessed with performance (hitting financial and activity targets). So a hospital with lots of ticked boxes and a sky-high death rate can gain huge financial rewards and independence from Whitehall.

The regulatory system that was supposed to come in post-Bristol has clearly failed. David Nicholson, now chief executive of the NHS, held senior management positions in the West Midlands between 2001 and 2006, and was succeeded by Cynthia Bower until 2008, when she became chief executive of the latest health watchdog (the Care Quality Commission). Yet neither seems to have had a clue what was going on under their noses in Mid-Staffs.

Bower claims she could have acted sooner if the HC (which the Care Quality Commission is replacing) had shared its data. The HC claims that West Midlands strategic health authority was "difficult to engage". A separate regulatory body, Monitor, was set up to vet and monitor foundation trusts. It clearly hasn't got a clue about quality either and has a very frosty and competitive relationship with the HC.

Since 2003, the HC has been chaired by Ian Kennedy as his reward for chairing the Bristol Inquiry. The HC took over from the Commission for Health Improvement (CHI), which awarded Mid-Staffs a top "three-star" rating in 2002-03. But according to the *Health Service Journal*, former Mid-Staffs non-executive director David Denny was unimpressed, saying: "The board was somewhat puzzled. We didn't believe the standards were as high as they needed to be."

So why wasn't something done? Ultimate responsibility lies with the leadership in the hospital. In May 2007, Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh NHS trust was told that its death rates were among the highest in the NHS (and not far short of mid-Staffs). But instead of challenging and denying the data, chief executive Andrew Foster accepted it, got the board and clinical staff behind him and did something about it (see *Eye* 1226). As a result, mortality rates have dropped by 15 percent, saving 200 lives a year.

But perhaps the most important lesson from Bristol and Mid-Staffs is that anyone on the frontline – staff, patient or relative – needs to be encouraged to speak up and have their concerns acted on. For every scandal in the NHS, the whistle has been blown long before the establishment has acted. The Stafford campaign group "Cure the NHS" knew perfectly well how appalling the care was, because their relatives were on the receiving end. The most enlightened NHS trusts encourage patients and relatives to provide feedback and use bedside software that allows instant monitoring of complaints (poor hygiene, wrong tablets, no food, drinking from vases). As the visionary Bristol anaesthetist Steve Bolsin observed: "If you want to prevent future disasters, you must never lose sight of the patient."

M.D.

NOTE: M.D. has signed the petition for an independent inquiry into the Mid-Staffs scandal (as opposed to more New Labour fudge) at www.patients-association.com.

Down on the Farm

ONE cannot expect Hilary "Veggie" Benn's Defra to take much interest in farming but lately even the Department for the Elimination of Farming and Rural Affairs has surpassed itself, inviting all the 1,700 vets and other staff who work in animal health to a series of nationwide "training days".

Vets in particular have been working their socks off dealing with the ever-growing crisis over bovine TB, bluetongue and the generally stressed state of desperate farmers who hardly know if they're coming or going. So, in tearing themselves away from frontline duties, they at least imagined a day-long training session might teach them something useful.

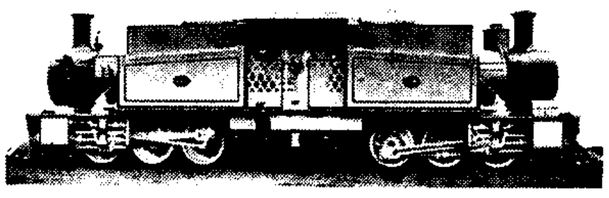
What they found instead was summed up by one very angry lady vet in a phone call to Jonathan Riley, news editor of *Farmers' Weekly*. She had just emerged from the training day she had attended with 130 colleagues in Warwickshire. They had expected to be hearing about the latest strategy for dealing with TB. But no. "We wasted an entire day playing games, mucking about and banging drums," she said. "I am appalled that the taxpayers are being asked to foot the bill for this, when we are expected to be fighting disease.

"I have been reduced to tears today," she went on. "It shows the people who thought this up don't realise the dreadful suffering that is going on in farming. Farmers are under stress, cattle are being slaughtered, sick badgers are suffering enormously and the disease is spreading to domestic animals. And what are we doing? We are banging drums. I cannot imagine why we were taken away from our work for this."

The purpose of this infantile exercise, it turned out, stems from Defra's plan to merge three departments, each dealing with separate issues: dairy hygiene, animal welfare and egg marketing. The point of the drum-banging was to illustrate how, although each department operates to a "different rhythm", it should be possible to bring them into synch: hence the crass "bonding" to the rhythm of the drums.

As a Defra official explained, the purpose of the play-day was to promote "effective teamwork and how it can help Animal Health deliver better outcomes in the future. This was done in a fun and interesting way which involved staff doing activities together." No doubt primary school head "Veggie" Benn would have beamed vacuously with approval.

'Mucksprеader'



SIGNAL FAILURES

Circular sore

WHEN London Underground announced last month that the Circle line would be reshaped, it didn't mention the confusion that will arise where trains are longer than stations.

Trains starting at Hammersmith will run round the Circle to Edgware Road, then back to Hammersmith. LU needs more passenger capacity, so each train will have seven carriages instead of today's six. But there isn't enough cash to modify all the infrastructure for longer trains because LU finances are still being battered by Gordon Brown's batty tube public private partnership (the PPP consortium Metronet having gone bust in 2007 with £2bn debts.)

The new trains will be designed so the last four doorways or front four, or a combination of both, can stay locked where Circle line platforms are shorter than the new trains. Regular travellers will adapt; but the Circle is heavily used by visitors, many travelling from mainline stations with luggage. What will happen when they realise the train is at their station and the nearest open door is a carriage away along a crowded aisle? Cue mayhem.

Getting the message across won't be easy either. At Paddington, Hammersmith-line platforms are long enough but Circle ones are too short for seven carriages.

Platforms aren't LU's only headache. Lots more passengers will change trains at poorly-equipped Edgware Road station. Tracks at Hammersmith station need costly extension for seven carriages. Today many trains are berthed in sidings around the Circle; unless LU can find big money to extend the sidings for seven carriages, it will waste resources shifting trains to and from sidings in suburban depots.

Metronet's promised new signalling for "sub-surface" lines (including also the Metropolitan and District) would have allowed extra trains on the Circle, potentially increasing Circle capacity with six-carriage trains until infrastructure was ready for seven carriages. Installation of new signalling should be happening now, but the contract was scrapped after Metronet went bust.

EXASPERATED members of the Scottish parliament (MSPs) still can't fathom the murky deal to extend First ScotRail's franchise, despite months of trying.

Last week they questioned Guy Houston. He resigned as finance director of government body Transport Scotland (TS) on 28 November, when an Audit Scotland report questioned his presence at meetings where the franchise extension was discussed (*Eye* 1229). TS recruited Houston from FirstGroup but didn't ask if he held shares; Houston didn't declare his FirstGroup shareholding until after his appointment. TS later allowed him to exercise options for thousands more WorstGroup shares.

In January TS said Houston had attended only two meetings where the extension was discussed, both when the deal was already done. Later TS admitted he'd attended earlier meetings. Houston told Scotland's public audit committee last week he had no input into financial decision-making on the extension, despite being finance director of the body managing FSR's franchise.

Minutes of a TS board meeting on 21 November record Houston "informed the board that he no longer had shares in FirstGroup and the board agreed that he could remain for the discussion, as there was no conflict of interest". In fact, Houston had transferred his shares to his wife in mid-November, around the time Audit Scotland warned him of its imminent comments. Houston told MSPs he transferred the shares for "tax efficiency purposes" and the minutes were incorrect.

TS was so obsessed with "market activity" (FirstGroup's share price) it didn't consult on the extension: even Scotland's transport minister didn't receive a full business case. Last week Barbara Hurst, an Audit Scotland director, revealed auditors were thwarted by the secrecy: "None of us knew that this rail franchise extension was being negotiated at this time. The audit team… if they knew, would have looked in more detail at the management arrangements." Once they knew of the negotiations, "there was no audit trail to show what had gone on here in terms of managing the conflict of interest."

These shadowy goings-on could easily have been avoided – the SNP simply needed to keep its pre-election promise to nationalise Scottish rail and stop money "disappearing into the pockets of shareholders".

'Dr B Ching'

ROTTEN BOROUGHS

NEWS FROM NOTTINGSCAM

FOR three years between 2003 and 2005, thousands of people on Nottingham city council's housing waiting list couldn't fathom why their turn for a property never materialised.

In January an Audit Commission report revealed why. Staff had allocated 2,700 properties to people not in housing need. Keys to homes were handed to those who either had the means to bribe officers or who were family members, friends or colleagues. On some properties expensive repairs were carried out by council contractors, with the taxpayers picking up the bill. Once the repairs were completed, the properties were bought at a discount under right-to-buy.

Chances of successful criminal prosecutions are not great because the standard of proof is higher than that required by the Audit Commission. In March, however, the council and Nottingham City Homes, an Almo (arm's length management company) that took over the management of the council's 33,000 homes during the last year of the scam, belatedly announced that some housing staff had been suspended and others transferred to new jobs. Those suspended are unlikely to include many of the senior management figures in charge at the time of the fraud – as they made good their escapes before the shit hit the fan.

● PENDLE borough council in Lancashire has published a glossy Visitors Guide which lists among distinguished people linked to the area the athlete Sir Roger Bannister. A visit is recommended to the Pendle Heritage Centre, "once home to the Bannister family, whose son was the famous athlete immortalised in the film *Chariots of Fire*".

It would have been quite something for Sir Roger, who was born in 1929 and ran the first four-minute mile in 1954, to have competed in the 1924 Paris Olympics alongside Harold Abrahams and Eric Liddell, but that's the stuff Great Britons are made of.

PUKKA OFF

"COMMUNITIES" secretary Hazel Blears recently heaped praise on Rotherham council for the way it is "involving" local people in helping shape the town's public services.

This has come as news to hundreds of elderly and infirm residents and their families, who have been told the Labour council's meals-on-wheels service is to be handed over to the private sector. Around 600 pensioners will in future receive weekly deliveries of frozen "meals" that must be reheated in a microwave.

The council, which will save around £100,000 a year by the change, could soon face a legal bill far higher than that. Lawyers with a history of winning judicial reviews against public bodies are preparing to represent a number of the town's oldies. A major platform of their case will be that the council failed to consult those affected, as it is required to do by law – not least the 12 staff who will lose their jobs.

The £100,000 "saving" is also somewhat less than the £128,000 in council grants received last year by Jamie Oliver's *Ministry of Food* programme when it set up shop in the town centre. Nor will it cover recent generous increases in councillors' allowances – another matter on which no one bothered to consult the locals.

> At the latest meeting of Sleaford Town Council's strategy committee members felt every avenue had to be explored before accepting the road in its present form.
>
> *Sleaford Standard*

SHAGPILE CARPETED

THANET council's gruesome twosome, Tory leader Sandy "Shagpile" Ezekiel and deputy leader Roger Latchford, have been censured by the council's standards committee after a fracas in a high street shop.

The incident took place in the Margate branch of Edinburgh Woollen Mills last June. The shop's manager was handing over a 1,500-signature petition protesting against a rumoured cutback in community wardens to her Labour ward councillor, Iris Johnston, when the Tories barged in. Clearly they hadn't come to shop for kilts and tartan trews. "With both guns blazing", they began berating the women in front of two astonished local hacks who had turned up to report the handover. In the argy bargy that ensued, Latchford "leapt like a salmon" and made a grab for the petition, according to the reporters.

Having spent 10 months producing a desk-crushing 326-page report, the standards committee has censured Ezekiel and found that Latchford's conduct brought the council into disrepute.

It's not the first time Ezekiel has been up before the standards-wallahs. A year ago the carpet shop owner and former boxer was censured for calling the then mayor of Margate a "fucking tosser" at a black-tie do and threatening another Labour councillor who tried to intervene with the words: "Come on, just put your face in mine."

Following the committee's verdict, Ezekiel has sent Cllr Johnston an apology – which she says was all she had wanted in the first place. Shame he had to wait until £30,000 of taxpayers' money had been spent on m'learned friends before doing the decent thing.

TESCO TOWERS

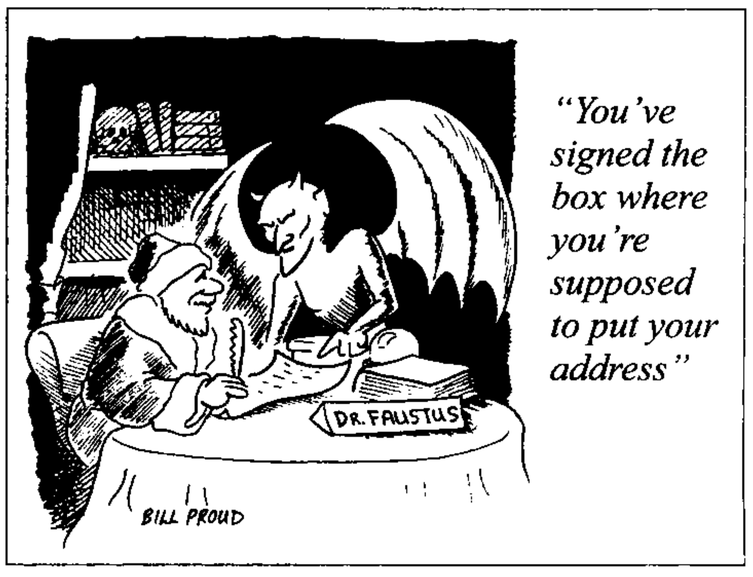
IT'S NOT unknown for a developer to make a second, revised planning application after receiving a rejection. But something odd has happened in the east London borough of Tower Hamlets. Developer Goldcrest has submitted a duplicate of an application which was *approved* last year.

The scheme is for 208 flats and a Tesco Metro convenience store, in buildings twice the height of nearby properties. It will result in the loss of a car park and, opponents say, kill off local shops and a street market. The Labour council, on the other hand, thinks it will offer "wide-ranging regeneration benefits".

So why the new application? The original scheme was approved without an environmental impact assessment having been made, and local objectors are seeking a judicial review (JR) for that reason. The council freely admits that the second application is a response to the JR action and that it will be considered to avoid "risk or delay" to the project. Although the second application is identical to the first, the council's development control manager, Stephen Irvine, says some 2,000 previous objections "cannot be carried forward". So the planning committee may well meet on 2 April with only an apparent handful of objections. And even if the objectors win their judicial review regarding the first application, they may be obliged to start the whole expensive process all over again for the second. How very, er, convenient.

PS: Tower Hamlets planner Stephen Irvine has featured in the *Eye* before. In 2006 he dismissed residents of Bow, who were upset that developers Countryside Properties had built a block of flats beside their homes without planning permission, by telling them that the belief that all new developments required such permission was "an urban myth" (*Eye* 1165).

● "MOST councils," reports the always fascinating *Children & Young People Now* magazine, "do not consult under-fives when putting together their Children and Young Peoples Plan, according to new research. The report, put together by the National Foundation for Educational Research for the Local Government Association, found that while 97 percent of councils surveyed consulted with 14- to 19-year-olds, and the same number consulted six- to 13-year-olds, only 35 percent said they consulted under-fives." Disgraceful!



"You've signed the box where you're supposed to put your address"

LEVELLING THE PLAYING FIELDS

SPORTS minister Gerry Sutcliffe announced last week that "No sports playing field needed by the community should be lost." Sadly, government employees are about to face cutbacks in their own sports facilities.

The Civil Service Sports Ground at Chiswick is available to tens of thousands of people from across central government departments, quangos, public bodies such as museums and companies doing government work. However, the Civil Service Sports Council (CSSC) claims that not enough of them have been using it. It announced on 4 March that it would be "partially closing" the sports club and grounds from September to save £190,000 a year.

CSSC, which is largely funded through membership dues (helped by a grant from the Cabinet Office to keep government workers healthy), is to close the clubhouse, bar and bowling green. The ground will also see a reduction in tennis courts from 17 to six and just two cricket squares will be maintained instead of the current four.

IT'S GRIM UP NORTH LONDON KNIFE & PACKER

THE DRUG SQUAD HAS HAD YOU TWO UNDER SURVEILLANCE FOR MONTHS
WE'VE GOT A CONCEALED ROOM, HEATERS, FANS: ALL THE HALLMARKS OF AN ILLEGAL MARIJUANA PLANTATION...
THE ONLY HERB IN HERE IS BASIL, OFFICER...
IT'S STRICTLY MEDICINAL!

NOOKS and CORNERS

IN *Eye* 1230 I described how the London borough of Southwark is at last imposing a compulsory purchase order on the nefarious owners of the Gothic "Concrete House" in Dulwich who have wilfully neglected this pioneering listed building. A reader now points to a similar situation opposite the house, on the south side of Lordship Lane, where stands St Peter's Church.

This building was also designed by Charles Barry junior, architect of Dulwich College (which donated the site). The church, with its landmark steeple, was built in 1873-85; Francis Bumpus, the ecclesiologist (who sang in the choir), thought it "a decidedly meritorious, if not a great work, and shows a desire on the part of the architect to do what is right". Together with the adjacent church hall, it is listed grade II.

St Peter's was declared redundant by the Southwark diocese in 1984 and sold to the Benedictine Community of Worth Abbey. Subsequently it was sold on to something called the Deeper Life Bible Church, which has since neglected the building. It now looks forlorn. The boundary walls and railings have been damaged, the gate piers demolished and large, hideous hoardings attached to the hall – all without listed building consent.

Hideous hoardings and demolished gates: St Peter's Church Hall

A decade ago Southwark council declined to grant retrospective consent for these alterations; the congregation appealed but Southwark's refusal was upheld by the Planning Inspectorate in 2001. Since when the condition of the site has continued to deteriorate and Southwark has done nothing. As my correspondent remarks: "What is the point of listing buildings to protect them and creating conservation areas to provide the traditional and entirely appropriate setting for a listed church if the planning laws can apparently be flouted with impunity?"

SPEAKING of churches, and flouting, despite the vigorous campaign to keep it open, despite the City of Westminster's rejection of the proposal by a developer, Hammer Holdings, to convert it into a "Wellness Centre", and even though another church would like to buy the building and keep it as a place of worship, the finance committee of the diocese of London has decided to immediately sell St Mark's North Audley Street – which it has wilfully neglected for decades – to Hammer Holdings (Eye 1221).

Such greedy cynicism can only bring the administration of the Church of England further into disrepute. As Lady Sainsbury, president of the Save St Mark's campaign, has remarked: "We believe that the decision to sell is wrong. It is wrong because Holy Trinity, Brompton Road, can repair and use the church for the purposes for which it was designed and dedicated; it is wrong because they will be rushing through this sale… just to get shot of the problem. It is wrong because they will be ignoring two ancient covenants that commit the land on which the church is built 'for ecclesiastical purposes forever'."

NOT that the Church of England is alone in such arrogant, anti-social behaviour. In *Eye* 1216, I described how the Roman Catholic diocese of Shrewsbury suddenly closed the church of SS Peter & Paul in New Brighton – the so-called "Dome of Home" in the Wirral, despite promises not to do so. Such is the real attitude of the Roman Church to the laity, despite all the verbiage to the contrary.

For years the diocese had failed to spend the money given by the congregation for the upkeep of their church. Indeed, the Save Our Unique Landmark pressure group had even paid for covert maintenance to protect this magnificent domed building from deliberate neglect. But now Wirral council has decided to issue an urgent works notice to oblige the diocese to maintain this listed building – thus requiring it to spend money and render futile its shabby closure and the eviction of its congregation.

NOW some good news from the parish of St Peter, Draycott, in Somerset, which had decided to sell its remarkable font for £110,000 as it was designed by the famous Victorian architect William Burges.

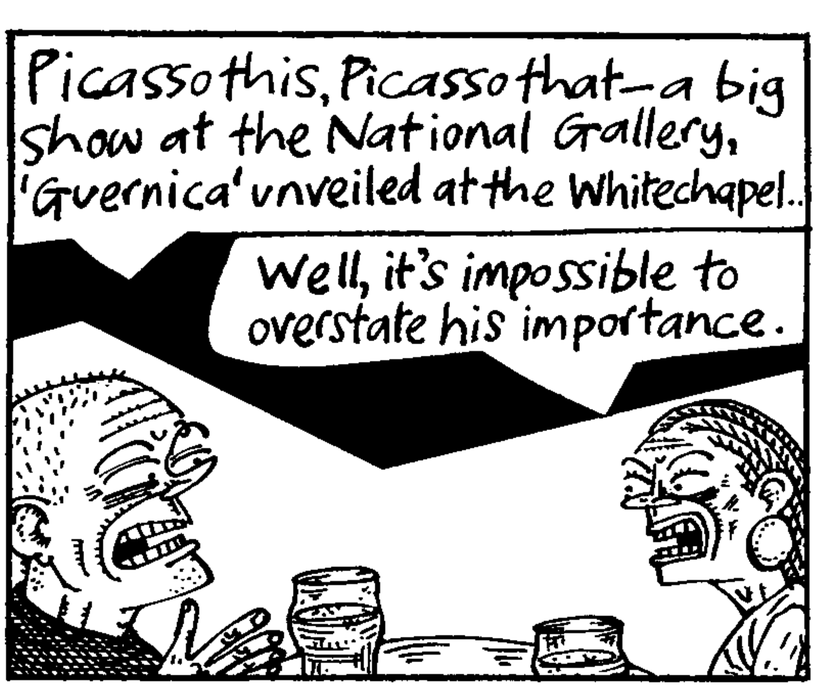
This was opposed by the diocesan advisory committee, by the Council for the Care of Churches and by the Victorian Society, but the chancellor of the diocese of Bath & Wells approved the sale. Now, however, the Church of England's Court of Arches has overruled the chancellor and declared that the parish is not facing a financial emergency and that to allow such an important architectural fixture in a listed building to be sold to a private collector is unacceptable. The judges declared that, had this shabby piece of asset-stripping been allowed, a disastrous precedent would have been set.

Nevertheless, it seems to be a case of swings and roundabouts, for the same chancellor, the Worshipful Timothy Briden, has now made another judgement that sets an alarming precedent. After light fittings by Sir Ninian Comper were removed from the medieval church at Bishop's Lydiard without a faculty as part of a restoration scheme – thus disobeying C of E rules – the parish appealed to a higher authority (Eye 1216). But Briden has declined to require any modification of the scheme.

'Piloti'

YOUNG BRITISH ARTISTS

BY BIRCH


Picasso this, Picasso that – a big show at the National Gallery, 'Guernica' unveiled at the Whitechapel..
Well, it's impossible to overstate his importance.
He was the Damien Hirst of his day!
You'd go that far?

"Look at that saddo hunched over his computer!"

Letters

Private Eye

Lookalike

Laurel

Sarkozy

Sir,

Sacre bleu! Quel etonnant resemblance entre M. Nicolas Sarkozy, le mari du fameuse stunner Italienne Carla Bruni, et le comique anglais Stan Laurel. Mon dieu, est ce que c'est possible que Stan Laurel est actuellement le grandpere du Nicolas? Zut alors! Cela could expliquer bien pourquoi la France est dans un autre fine mess!

PETER REYNOLDS,
Birmingham.

Trials and error?

Sir,

Paula Ross (Society of Homeopaths) cites some 134 trials of homeopathy as evidence of the efficacy of homeopathy. I have no idea where these are. The Complementary and Alternative Medicine Specialist Library only reports about 40 trials (for and against). Anyhow, quantity doesn't signify quality, and SoH tends to cherry-pick the ones that support them. A definitive meta-analysis (which considers the quality of all the data out there) by Shang et al. called "The End of Homeopathy" finds it does no better than placebo.

Regarding homeopaths' attitudes to HIV treatment, Paula cites the SoH 2007 symposium on the subject. And who was the keynote speaker at this symposium? Peter Chappell, talking about how homeopathy can "remedy" (i.e. cure) HIV/AIDS. To quote SoH's own flier for the event, "Join us for a fascinating insight into the role of homeopathy in treating HIV/AIDS." It would be funny if it wasn't so damned tragic.

Yours,
JAYESH NAVIN SHAH,
Via email.

Digger dig

Sir,

Your item on Sky and ITV missed some of the more enjoyable subtleties.

ITV had actually flatly turned down the approach from Virgin Media two weeks ***before*** *Sky suddenly spent over £900m buying 17.9% of ITV. Despite this, Sky has hung on to the stake, through a series of expensive appeals against regulatory rulings that they must dispose of most or all of the shares, which cost 135p each to acquire and are now worth less than 20p. One of the factors driving down the share price has been that the Sky holding makes it almost impossible for anyone (including RTL, as per the article in The Times) to make a takeover bid for ITV.*

As for Virgin Media, paradoxically Sky could not have prevented ITV from proposing a merger of equals, which would have been possible for at least 15 months after the Sky intervention. Now, of course, ITV's shares have sunk to the point where ITV is worth only a third of Virgin Media, and the opportunity has been missed.

Sky described its "investment" in ITV (which ITV fiercely opposed) as "strategic". It's a tribute to the broadmindedness of Sky's shareholders (including its most influential one) that the two executives who dreamed up this "strategic" wheeze have both subsequently been promoted – to chairman and CEO – despite costing the company £800m in cash, so far.

Happy days.

Yours sincerely,
DAVID ELSTEIN,

London SW15.

"The registry should include people such as me.
"We were the backbone of osteopathy

Bradford Telegraph & Argus

Madeira lament

Sir,

Letter from Madeira (Eye 1230). On behalf of the Madeirans I would like to point out that Alberto Jardim has been repeated elected leader of the regional government for ***34*** *years now in quinquennial elections which are at least as well regulated as in the UK – each time with an increased majority.*

Jardim's continuing, and growing, popularity over 35 years has been largely due to his ***forceful*** *and* ***effective*** *negotiations with Lisbon and Brussels, which have enabled an amazing transformation of the island's economic and social condition. His opponents hate the fact that he has been so successful and the great majority of Madeirans wish he could go on and on! However he has said that he will not stand again and then, I believe, problems will begin.*

ANDREW MEAD,

Madeira.

"I hate it when Dad dances at parties – it's so embarrassing"

Bloody awful

Sir,

Your letter writer (Eye 1232) is wrong, wrong, wrongitty wrong. Blood is neither bought nor sold in the U.S. There is a commercial market for plasma, which contains no live blood cells. Your protein-enriched shampoo may contain heat-treated plasma, but your arm won't.

When you give blood at a Red Cross Blood Center or any blood bank, you are giving it away. No money ever changes hands, although cookies, juice, and the occasional tee shirt are on offer. All blood and blood products given to people comes from volunteer blood – it even says so on the blood bag. It's not just a good idea – it's the law.

I will declare an interest: for three years before I retired I worked for the American National Red Cross, Blood Services, Southwest Region.

I am also a three-gallon donor. Giving blood did not add one red cent to my salary.

We don't re-use needles, either.
ELIZABETH HOLMANS,
Registered Nurse (ret.)

Via email.

Lookalike

Kim

Anne

Sir,

While watching Scotland play a recent Rugby Union International at Murrayfield, I was surprised to see the bouffant-haired Dear Leader of North Korea Kim Jong-il in the Royal Box. Usually it is our beloved Princess Royal in the dark glasses – maybe she was opening a bridge in North Korea.

SCOTT A. KEIR M.A. (HONS)
PGCE(S),

Via email.

Brookner no criticism

Sir,

Please don't be rude to Anita Brookner (Literary Review, Eye 1232)! I love her books: it's such fun reading about all these people who have interesting jobs and who are well-off enough to have spacious dwellings in expensive parts of London, but who nevertheless have such startlingly miserable and unfulfilled lives.

Hats off to Miss Brookner – she's turned Schadenfreude into an art-form!

Yours truly,
RUTH GRIMSLEY,

Sheffield.

Wake up!

Sir,

Shame on ye! You put Prof. Joep Leerssen's lecture on "Cultural Transfer by a Commodious Vicus of Recirculation" into Pseuds Corner (Eye 1232). Tut tut! As any Irish – or Dutch – fule no, this is a thoughtful, witty and very gracious allusion to the language found in the opening paragraph of Joyce's "Finnegans Wake".

CHARLES G. MOUNT,

Via email.

● Oops! Apologies. This one slipped through the net. Ed.

Scenes You Seldom See

"Sorry, I know cold calls are a nuisance, so I'll just leave you my contact details and get off the line..."

Meyer oh my!

Sir,

Though your review of Breaking Dawn (Literary Review, Eye 1231), the last, supposedly, of the Twilight books, hit most of the high and low points of the series, the review didn't mention the series' most salient feature: its implicit celebration of chastity.

Author Stephanie Meyer is a practising Mormon, and though most commentators mention this fact in passing, the writers also contort themselves to avoid drawing a connection between Meyer's faith and the sexual frustration she imposes on her puppets. In fact, there is a vital connection, as Meyer is pandering, at least theoretically, to both advocates and followers in midwestern and southern high schools of the New Chastity, which sounds very old indeed.

In America, the chastity movement is mostly an imaginary thing. Its adherents profess a personal ban on pre-marital sex but in practice have a flexible, Clintonian definition of sex, as well as imaginative ways to be intimate that run parallel to their definition of sex, techniques that would make a Victorian Urning blush. Ultimately, in a clinch they simply drop the whole charade and get on with it. In result, teen pregnancies along the Bible Belt are shockingly high.

Meyer provides a misty climate in which these fantasies of chastity can thrive in the minds of tweeners before they hypocritically change course when bumping up against the reality of biology.

D. K. HOLM,

Via email.

Photo opportunity

Sir,

For the first time in history, shareholders are experiencing negative returns on ten-year investments in the stock market. Do you have any evidence of other in-vestors who have been left exposed over even longer timescales?

DARREN HUNTER,

Oxford.

Two left feet

Sir,

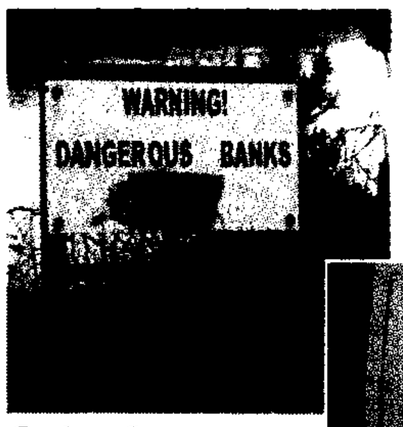
'Remote Controller' asks why the usual song-and-dance routine by newscasters was absent from this year's Comic Relief (EyeTV, 1232).

Could it have something to do with the fact that this is actually a feature of the BBC's other charity telethon, Children In Need?

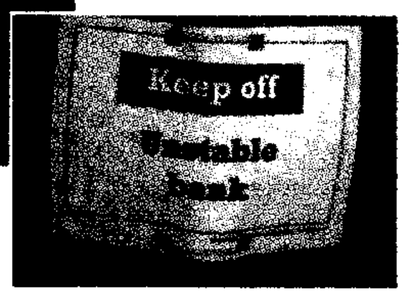
Regards,
SIMON HERBERT,

Eastbourne, East Sussex.

I-SPY



River Awe, Scotland (left). **Submitted by David J. Simpson.**



Goring, Sussex (right). **Submitted by Vicki Berger.**

£10 paid for similar submissions. *(SAE required for return of photographs)*

Bleating about the bush

Sir,

Re: Surgeon rants to MD – Medicine Balls – Andrew McIrvine (Eye 1231). It's just as if the working time directive has arrived for Andrew McIrvine. Why doesn't he get off his arse and do some training? If he does not like the end product in today's surgeon he does not have to sign them up. The days of 100-plus hours per week are over, as is abusing the overseas trainees for doing the donkey work for the NHS.

There are 6,000 UK graduates in medicine churned out this year and they will need training to a high standard. Stop bleating and get on with it.

Yours sincerely,
A.J. BANKS MScFRCS,

Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon, Ex-Chair – Specialist Advisory Committee in Trauma & Orthopaedic Surgery.

Log off

Sir,

Police Log usually manages to stay just on the right side of the "political correctness" divide: poking fun at cultural relativism and over-zealous positive discrimination, without actually veering into prejudice. Sadly, Eye 1232 crossed that divide with its satirical angle on protests at the Royal Anglian homecoming ceremony. While it might be perfectly reasonable to frown on the demonstrators' actions or sentiments, it is crude and dishonourable to assume that their behaviour is any way linked to terrorism or anti-Semitism. Please leave that sort of unhelpful caricature to the tabloids.

Yours,
MARTIN POLLARD,

Caerphilly.

Shell shocked

Sir,

We are appalled at your publication of so many anti-tortoise cartoons.

Does Husband really think tortophobic images are funny? Cancel our subscriptions soonish.

Yours in disgust,
ANN FIBIAN
ELLE EATHERBACK.

Via email.

Pseudo Names

... Gordon Brown has just resigned.

APRIL FEWELL.

... May I just warn you that your decision to publish all these stupid letters with made-up names is likely to rebound on you, with unpredictable consequences.

RICK O'SHEA.

... Please do not end the excellent Pseudo Names feature.

MAUREEN THESAME-VAYNE.

... Now that the spring weather is upon us, perhaps I can stop reading all this silliness and get out in the garden where there is much work to do.

LORNE MOWER.

... Please don't stop publishing pseudo names just yet. As we Spanish used to say when driving out the last of the occupying forces, there's always room for...

JUAN MOOR.

... Why not publish the best of Pseudo Names as a small book? I know the copyright belongs to the letter writers but don't worry about that.

NICK IDEAS.

... Please, please don't stop doing pseudo names. It's a refreshingly silly item in an otherwise worthy rag. For Beelzebub's sake, cut that pathetic name-list, damn you all!

JACQUELINE HYDE.

... I am enjoying this section of Private Eye and have now started to collect back issues. However if the silly names keep up at this rate I shall soon run out of space.

CHESTER DRAWS.

... Eventually your Pseudo Names section will end. It will be sad, but what can you do...?

KAY SAYRAH.

... Please please don't axe this wonderful column.

FANNY S. SPART (no relation)

... I do not know what hookahs your correspondents have been smoking, nor from which bottles they have imbibed, nor even what mushrooms they may have consumed. The pseudonyms used have no credibility and have quite obviously been dreamed up.

ALICE N. VON DER LANT.

... Your Pseudo Names column has become a festering sore and requires incisive action.

LANCE BOYLE.

... I laughed so much at this week's silly names that I just had to sit down and have a nice cuppa.

T. STRAINER.

... I consider your Pseudo Name feature to be anti-Islamic – and I know where your correspondents live...

G. HADD.

● Er... Now I come to think of it, Mr Hadd has made a very good point. Perhaps it *is* time to end this correspondence. Ed.

"Isn't it about time you gave in and got a BlackBerry?"

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

"The best horse won, and that's all you can ask in any sport..."
JOHN INVERDALE, Radio 5 Live
(Anon)

"He [Roque Santa Cruz] doesn't look one million per cent happy."
ANDY GRAY, Sky Sports
(Richard Stephens)

"The government's going to kill the golden goose."
TIM MARTIN (Wetherspoon Chairman), BBC Radio 4
(Rob Taylor)

"And so it's two down and three to go as Manchester United aim for the quadruple."
IAN ABRAHAMS, Talksport
(Scott Slorach)

"Normally, the Pakistani police have rifles and atomic weapons."
GEOFF BOYCOTT, Radio 5 Live
(Martin Watson)

Pedantry Corner

... Regarding Updated Shakespeare No 37 (Cartoon, p3, Eye 1232), it is not Hamlet with a skull who comments on borrowing and lending, that was Polonius. Hamlet is not even on stage at the time. That happens in Act 1 Scene 3. The skull belongs to Yorick, and it happens in Act 5 Scene 1.

GUY CUDMORE.

... Disappointing that you chose to make the same point about American DVDs not playing in "standard UK DVD players" twice – on the opening page and the Supreme Leader's missive – when it's drastically out of date.

Even the most rudimentary of research would have told you that in fact almost all DVD players sold in the UK are "multi-region" and are capable of playing DVDs from all areas of the world with the use of a simple 4 or 5 digit unlock code via the handset. Next time Richer Sounds call to renew their advertising, ask them to send you a brochure.

GAVIN POWELL.

... Whilst not wishing to defend the ignorant masses, I think the recent Dumb Britain question relating to Leslie Hore-Belisha was a little unfair. If his name is associated with anything it is a beacon, commonly found of either side of a Zebra Crossing, but not the crossing itself. I have never heard anybody refer to a "Belisha Crossing", but as I am only 44, maybe this was before my time given that he died in 1957. Or did he actually have stripes?

DARREN KING.

Re: Ford "axing 850 jobs" (Street of Shame, Eye 1231), and Ford taking 16 hacks to Courmayeur. You finish this article saying Treble Glühweins all round!" As Courmayeur is in Italy, surely it would be "Treble vin brulés all round!"

E. SALK.

... On page 7 of Eye 1232, you refer to the University of London SOAS as the "School of Oriental and Asian Studies". As that would imply some overlap, would you care to consider? It's the School of Oriental and African Studies. I should know; I studied there many moons ago.

TONY KEHOE.

Letter from **Kuwait City**

from Our Own Correspondent

"PITY poor Sheikh Nasser Mohammed Al Ahmed Al Jaber Al Sabah. Our prime minister is having another wretched year, hounded by parliament over his expenses and dogged by corruption scandals.

A softly spoken reformist, Sheikh Nasser has watched helplessly as his pet projects are neutered by MPs. A $17bn refinery deal with Dow Chemical fell through in March. A $5bn economic stimulus package idles in the wings. The undead corpse of Project Kuwait, a $75bn plan to overhaul our energy industry, staggers through a second decade of political debate, not a penny of investment in sight.

Sheikh Nasser's most vocal critics are the Islamists who throng our parliament. We Kuwaitis are proud of this institution, a rowdy bastion of democracy in the Gulf. But we'd be prouder still if the stand-off between MPs and our ruling Al Sabah family had not blighted the economy. Even at the height of the recent oil boom, foreign investors steered clear and citizens sent their savings offshore. No wonder. The stock market has flopped and our two biggest investment banks, Global Investment House and Investment Dar, are on the brink.

So who will rid Sheikh Nasser of these troublesome clerics? Step forward Tony Blair, a good friend to the Kuwaiti ruling family and the first western leader to visit us after the allied invasion of Iraq in 2003. His trip to Kuwait, he said at the time, was "important to him personally".

We Arabs appreciate such sentiments, though we were puzzled by Mr Blair's ongoing passion for our patch of desert. As Middle East peace envoy, he has chosen Kuwait as his first port of call on numerous official tours of the region, most recently in January and again in March. Is Kuwait a key player in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process? Hardly. Following our liberation from the Iraqi invaders in 1991, the Al Sabahs expelled the entire Palestinian population – some 400,000 workers – after PLO leader Yasser Arafat vowed solidarity with Saddam. There's no love lost between our peoples.

For very good friends, however, we give a very good price. So few were surprised when, in February, Sheikh Nasser hired his old chum Tony for a seven-figure fee to advise the Al Sabahs on "good governance".

Our PM has a lot to learn from the Great Leader. Like a deaf man at a wedding – as the Arab saying goes – Sheikh Nasser has a habit of treading on people's toes. In a political system based on patronage, no one likes a reformer. Not only has he turned his one-time parliamentary ally, the moderate Islamic Constitutional Movement, against him, but he has also alienated powerful factions in his own family.

One such is steered by Sheikh Ali Al Khalifa Al Sabah – "Ali Cash" to his friends. The former oil minister was quietly removed in the 1990s following an embezzlement scandal at Kuwait Oil Tanker Company. He still resents the ruling elite, and has exercised his power as owner of *Al Watan* newspaper to torpedo the deal with Dow. Populist MPs took up the cause, forcing the PM to cancel the contract and summoning him to a grilling over his private expenses.

Who could Sheikh Nasser turn to in his hour of need? The obvious ally is his uncle, the emir, and his crony Tony. But what sort of "good governance" do we need? Mr Blair, as he showed while preparing for the invasion of Iraq, is skilled at putting political expedience before democratic principles; and perhaps our rulers are acting on his advice already. On 18 March, a month after Tony Blair Associates were hired, Emir Sheikh Sabah Al Ahmad Al Sabah bailed out his nephew by dissolving the Kuwaiti parliament. Now all we're waiting for is the dodgy dossier on Dow.

FUNNY OLD WORLD

COMPILED BY **VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH**

● "I've performed over 7,000 liposuctions during the past decade," Dr Alan Bittner told reporters at his cosmetic surgery clinic in Beverly Hills, "and I've never had a single serious complication. However, I am left with a hell of a lot of fat, and I don't like to waste it, so I convert it into bio-diesel, or what I call 'lipodiesel'. One gallon of fat will produce a gallon of lipodiesel, and I've been using it for months to power my Ford Explorer and my girlfriend's Lincoln Navigator. Despite the negative publicity, I can assure you that what I'm doing isn't macabre, and most of my patients are delighted I'm using their fat for fuel, because not only do they lose their love handles or chubby belly, they also get to take part in saving the Earth."

Dr Bittner was defending his actions after several patients filed a lawsuit against his practice, alleging unprofessional conduct. "Unfortunately, there are people who are offended by the idea of using human fat to solve our energy problems, and religious extremists have been making threats against me and my family. I apologise for any offence given, none was intended. I merely meant to show that alternative energy is all around us, if we open our eyes and have a sense of curiosity. I would like to make clear that rumours about me having a private jet that runs on human fat are entirely untrue. Due to frivolous lawsuits, I have decided to close my practice in Beverly Hills and relocate. Probably to South America." *(Cosmetic Surgery News, 29/12/08. Spotter: Peter Owen)*

– ● –

● *Sir, My wife and I think* The Door *is a very good read. It keeps us up to date with what's happening in local churches.*

I have written this letter to ask some advice. We keep rabbits (Zachariah and John) and it is lovely to see our grandchildren (also called Zachariah and John) playing with them. Last week, our grandchildren were helping me clean out the hutch when I came upon a rather worrying discovery. My wife Doris had used copies of The Door as underlay bedding, and I am worried that God might be offended by our allowing such a holy publication to be used for such an unholy purpose. My wife says God won't mind, as he knows all about droppings and understands the rabbits are much loved. However, I have stopped using The Door *for such purposes, and use the Daily Mail instead.*

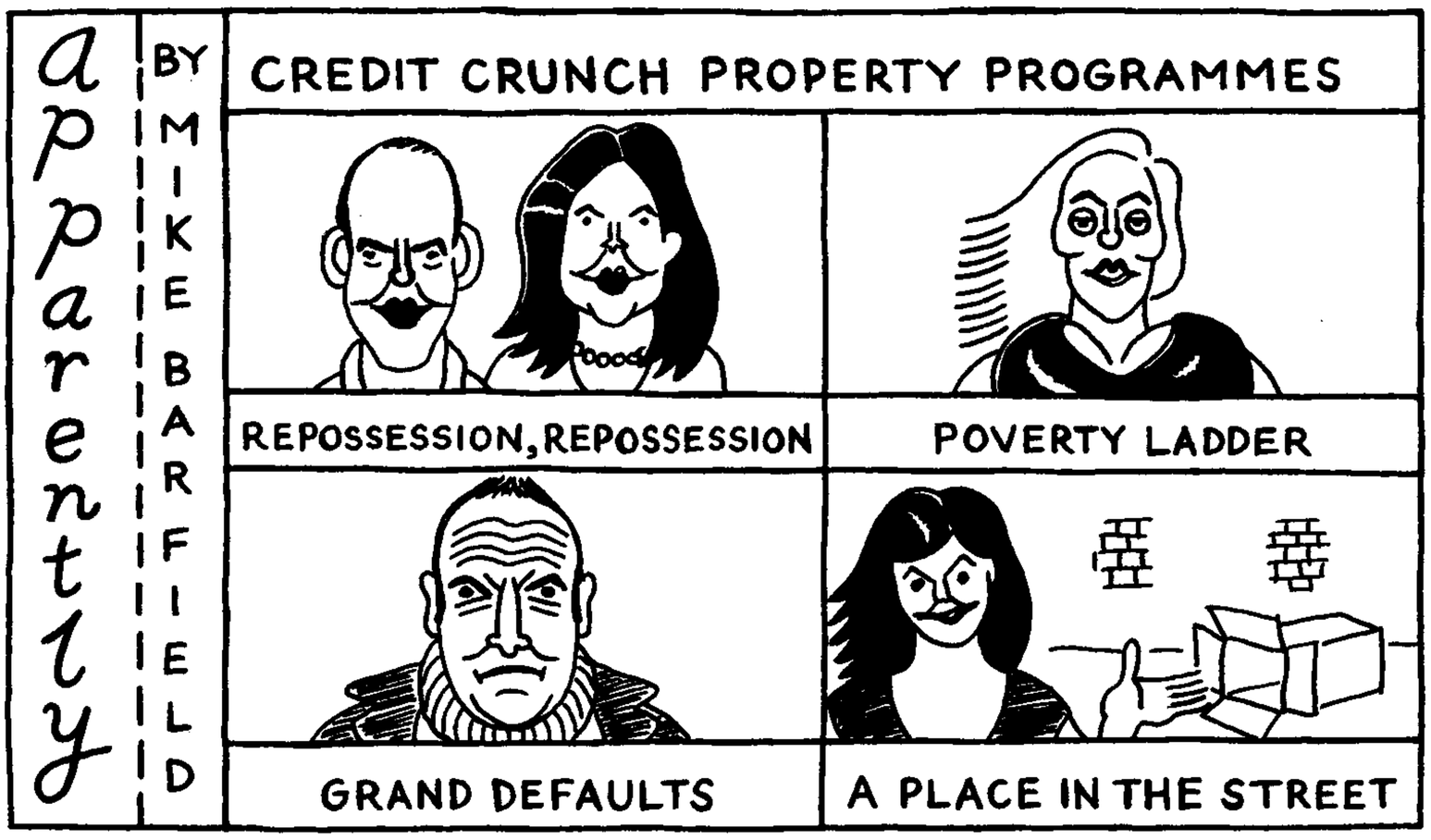
Please can you advise me how I can go about begging God's forgiveness? My wife meant well, and I hope God understands this. Could you perhaps provide us with a suitable prayer? We

will get Zachariah and John to join us in saying it when they next visit. Jeff Tingle, Bodicote, Banbury. (The Door [Oxford diocesan newspaper], December 2008. Spotter: Keith Bosley)

– ● –

● "We first discovered gold in the sewage in 1987," Yoshihide Nakayama of the Japan Sewage Works Agency told reporters in Nagano, "and made attempts to extract it. We filtered the 138,000 tons of sewage water that passes through here each day, dried the sludge, and burned it. But we only obtained 35 grams of gold per ton of ash, so it wasn't economically viable to continue.

"However, we recently started burning the residual soot in a furnace at 1,600 degrees, producing what is known as fly ash. Each ton of fly ash contains about 1.9 kilograms of gold, and because the price of gold has risen sharply, it's now economically worthwhile to extract it, even after taking collection costs into consideration. We're not sure why there is so much gold in the sewage here. There used to be a goldmine nearby in the sixteenth century, when the feudal warlord Takeda Shingen ruled the region, so perhaps it comes from there. Or it could be in the wastewater from factories that manufacture high-precision machinery. Whatever the reason, we expect our gold profits from sewage to exceed 20 million yen by the end of 2009." *(Asahi Shimbun, March 2009. Spotter: David Evans)*



PRIME MINISTERIAL DECREE NO. 41

From the Desk of the Supreme Leader

Comrades,

This is one of the most historic weeks in the history of the world. Not only has Comrade Goody passed away (*solemn music plays briefly*), but I have been flying around the globe on your behalf, meeting with all the most powerful Supreme Leaders on earth. Now they have asked to come to London to seek my advice and leadership on how the world can be saved from economic breakdown, through the well-tested means of Brownite-neo-Keynesian bailoutism.

These leaders are firmly agreed that we in Britain have shown the way forward in committing our entire economic output for the next 50 years to the saving of our banking community; a small price to pay for such a prize!

History has shown that when a great man proposes such a revolutionary idea, there will always be small-minded and blinkered mediocrities who are incapable of recognising genius when it is staring them in the face.

In this instance, we single out the unimaginative suburban hausfrau Merkel with her rigid Germanic concept of "balancing the books". She should reserve her energies for the cooking of sauerkraut – and to be frank, a "sour kraut" would be a suitable description for the attitude of the German Chancellor on this matter! (My thanks are due to the Whitehall Humorous Interjection Directorate for this off-the-cuff, impromptu "giving the Supreme Leader a human face" remark, which is numbered 174/342 and can be found under Lighthearted References to National Stereotypes.)

Another so-called leader who also failed to see the brilliance of my fiscal anti-prudentite quantitative easementism was the philandering French philatelist Sarkozy, with his built-up shoes, his trophy wife and his obsession with protecting "French jobs for French workers". He would do much better to go into the kitchen and cook up some snails and frogs' legs and smother them in garlic. I thought our French friends "knew their onions", but not Monsieur Sarkozy when it comes to the hard facts of endogenous recessionary growth theory! (This joke is numbered 174/343 and can be found next to the one above.)

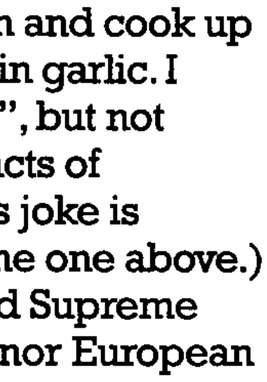
However, it is no accident that the first World Supreme Leader to sign up to my plan was not some minor European apparatchik, but, yes, the great Comrade President Obama himself, whom I am looking forward to welcoming to London where I shall be presenting him with a reciprocal box set of DVDs, including *The X-Factor* (2006), *The Best of the Antiques Roadshow* (1999-2001), *Morecambe and Wise Christmas Specials* (1972-1979), *Celebrity Big Brother* (2007) and *They Flew To Bruges* (original 1949 b/w version).

Yours,

Gordon Brown

Supreme Leader

"If you OWE £1 trillion, the answer is quite simple, just borrow £1 trillion to repay your debt. Problem solved!"



Taken from The Little Brown Book, Chapter 94, 'How the test of a Supreme Leader is to have the courage to think the thoughts that everyone else regards as insane'.

Comrade Lord Mandelson writes:

Fellow non-workers, many of you are feeling angry and let down by the comrade bankers and have allowed your emotions to cloud your judgement. This is false thinking. Because, my friends, the comrade bankers are doing all they can to assist the Supreme Leader in restoring confidence in the economy, which will give you back your jobs and your pensions and reverse the negative equity on your homes. To blame comrade bankers and to take to the streets shouting ill-considered slogans about the evils of globalised capitalism will help no-one. This is a time for unity, which is why the comrade police will be clamping down hard on any signs of subversive anti-bankism. You have been warned, and I would remind comrades that I know where they live and I am watching them at all times on Google Street View.

The Acting Non-Elected Supreme Leader

COMRADE MERVYN KING
A Warning

Let it be known that the Supreme Leader is displeased with Comrade King who has the indiscipline to question his plans for global economic salvation. Comrades will recall that it was I who specifically chose Comrade King to run the independent Bank of England where he would be free from Government control to say what he wanted and implement his own strategy.

Yet, what do we find? Comrade King has the effrontery to question the wisdom of the Supreme Leader's plan to borrow billions and trillions of pounds in order to get us out of debt. What sort of independence is that?

Surely, gratitude is what Comrade King should be offering rather than disloyalty to his trusted benefactor? And what is Comrade King's grand plan to save the world? A risible suggestion that there must be a limit to the amount of money that we can borrow and the laughable claim that spending more will only make things worse.

Let King remember that he is a mere functionary who owes his position entirely to my patronage. He is free, of course, to speak his mind. That is the whole point. But if he continues to do so, he will exercise his independence in a remote corner of Gulag Island in the Hebrides. I repeat he has been warned. He would not be the first King to lose his head at the will of the people.

G.B.

INTELLIGENCE BRIEFING

Comrades,

I have been given very specific, top-secret information at the highest level that, any day now, highly-trained Islamic terrorists are planning to explode a "dirty" nuclear bomb somewhere in London (possibly Trafalgar Square or it could be Forest Gate).

Furthermore, highly-disciplined and professionally-trained anarchists are planning to bring London to a halt in order to stop the Supreme Leader saving the world (again).

To combat the activities of these wreckers and saboteurs, I am planning to introduce emergency legislation, granting the police new powers to "stop and shoot" anyone they like at any time.

Only by these draconian measures can we hope to defend liberty in these islands. G.B.

GOVERNMENT TO INTRODUCE 'QUANTITATIVE SLEAZING'

by our Parliamentary Staff **Phil Expense-Account**

THE PRIME Minister, Gordon Brown, yesterday controversially promised to dramatically increase the amount of sleaze in circulation in Britain.

He explained, "We need a massive injection of sleaze to help the public lose confidence in this government."

He then detailed his five-point plan to bring the country to its knees.

1. Government ministers to claim porn films on expenses.

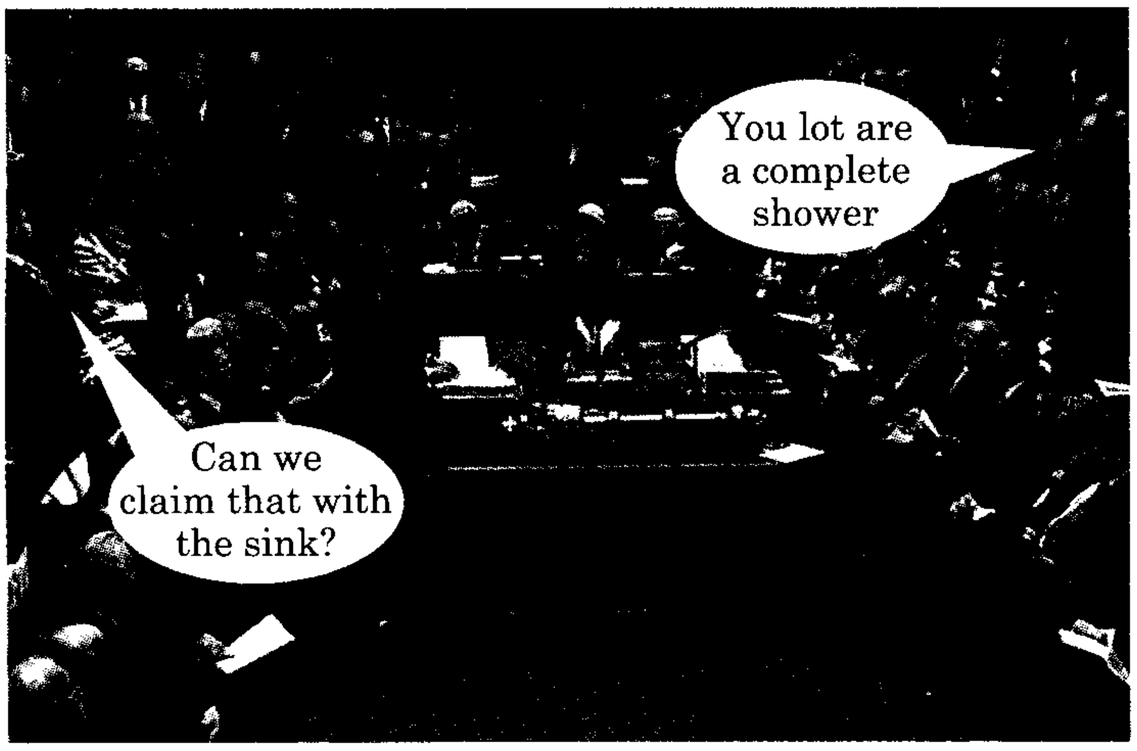
2. Government ministers to claim caravans as primary residences.

3. Government ministers to pretend to be living with their parents to claim allowances.

4. Government ministers to pretend to be living with their sisters to claim allowances.

5. Government MPs to participate in steamy Westminster love romps with mistresses in black stockings and suspenders. Cor! Phew! *(That's enough five-point plan, Ed).*

The Prime Minister said he was confident that this introduction of "quantitative sleazing" would take the country back to the golden period of the last days of John Major's government.



GLENDA SLAGG

Fleet Street's Summit of Achievement!?

■ **MADONNA!?!! Doesn'tshe-makeyersick?!? She's old enough to be a granny and yet here she is adopting a tiny tot who can't say "no"!?! As if Malawi hasn't got enough problems** ***(Sub: fill in what they are)*** **without Mad Madge swoopin' in to steal all their toddlers!?!! Madonna and child?! You've gotta be jokin'!?! Stick to what you're good at, darlin' – i.e. shovin' your crotch in our faces!?! No offence!?!**

■ HATS OFF to Madonna!?!! She might be old enough to be a granny but tender-hearted Madge has still got the energy to save a tiny tot from Malawi's war-torn hell *(Have you checked this, sub?!)*. Little Mercy will be given the chance of a new life as she watches her mother shove her crotch into people's faces!?!! Talk about a Mercy Mission!?! You've Madged my day!?!! Geddit?!!

■ *HERE THEY ARE – Glenda's Gorgeous G20 Gigolos!?!!*

● **Stanley Johnson.** He's BoJo's dad, stoopid!?! Like father, like son!?!! And I'll have either!?!! I'm not fussy – and neither are they!?!!

● **Jenson Button.** Show us your Winning Formula, Big Boy!?! You'll have Pole Position round at my place any time!?! Vroom?!?? Vroom!!?!

● **Spanish Finance Minister Pedro Solbes.** Crazy name!?! Crazy guy!?!!

Adio-o-o-s!!

THAT INCREDIBLE G20 SUMMIT AGREEMENT IN FULL

❶ We solemnly agree to have an agreement
❷ The agreement commits all parties to the issuing of a communiqué recording our agreement.
❸ Er...
❹ That's it.

POLICE LOG

Neasden Central Police Station

0830 hrs Every available officer to report for Emergency Riot Duty at the G20 Summit at the ExCel Centre. All officers to be issued with Kalashnikov assault rifles, Tasers and overtime claim forms (PX 74235b). In anticipation of the many hours of extreme policing to come, officers will receive a packed lunch consisting of the following items: one packet curry and pizza flavoured crisps; one large bar Cadbury's Fruit & Nut* milk chocolate; one packet KP Nuts (salted); one can Fanta orange drink.

Officers will be issued with guidelines on how to act effectively in the unfortunate event of the demonstrations remaining peaceful.

*Should any officer object to the Fruit & Nut bar on the grounds that he/she finds the nomenclature offensive to the Gay/Mentally Challenged communities, they may place a request for an alternative bar such as Mars, Snickers or KitKat. Applications for these should be made as soon as possible to WPC Stevenage (who is currently on pregnancy leave, thanks to PC Upminster) as stocks are limited at this moment in time.

"Ah, Mr Bond... I wasn't expecting you"

LORD MYNERS 'MISINFORMED' LORD MYNERS

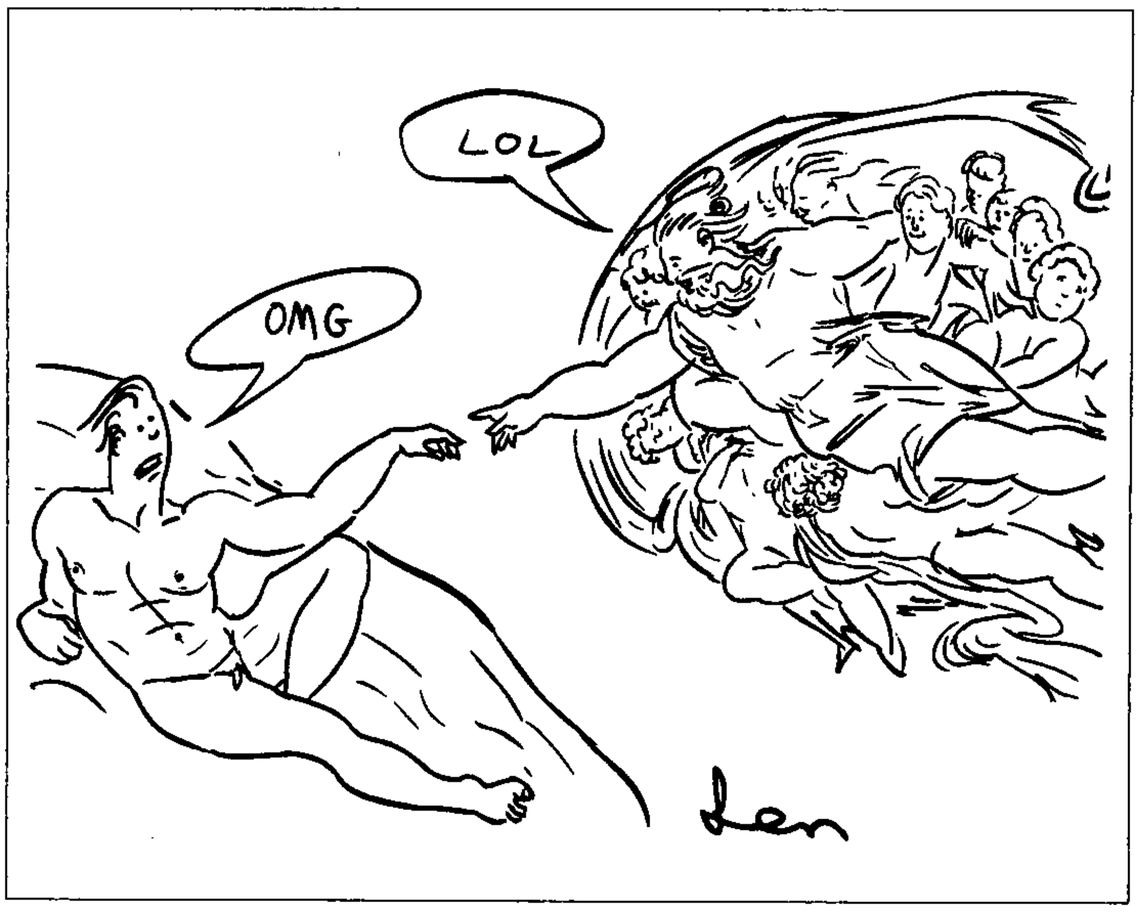
by Our Political Staff **Peter Oborwell**

LORD MYNERS today insisted that he had no knowledge of the off-shore companies he had set up in tax havens such as Bermuda, insisting that he was misinformed by Lord Myners at the time as to the nature of these companies.

"At no stage during the negotiations did Lord Myners inform me that by setting up these companies in tax havens I would be making a massive tax-free profit," a horrified Lord Myners told reporters.

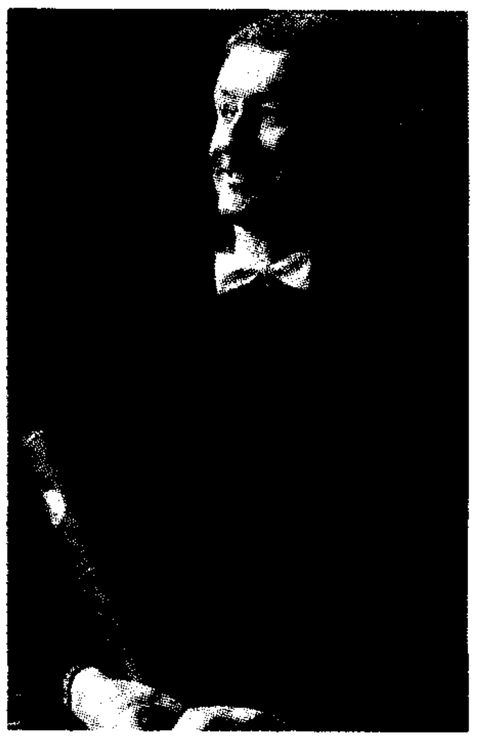
"I am obviously furious with myself for misleading me as to the nature of these companies, but clearly no blame can be attached to me for that."

Lord Myners insisted that the only people to blame for this were the RBS board, Sir Fred Goodwin and Chris Moyles.



"He was very fond of his bees"

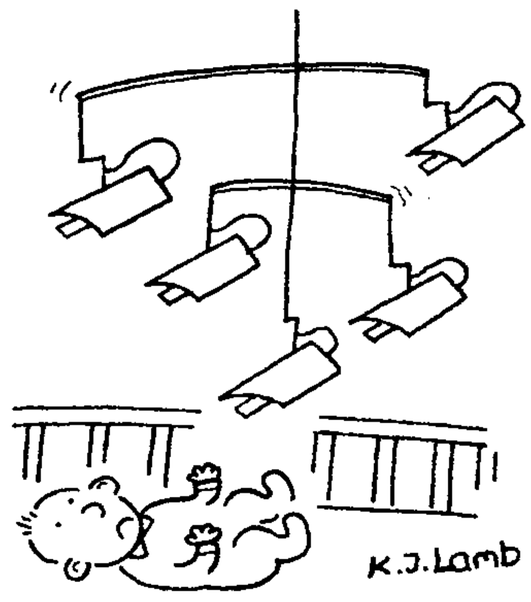
That Honorary Degree Citation In Full



SALUTAMUS FREDUS GOODWINUS APPELLATUS "FREDUS SHREDDUS" QUONDAM IMPERATOR BANKI ROYALIS CALEDONIAE ET NATWESTUM COUTTSQUE ET PRIMUS ADVISOR GORDONI BRUNIS IN REBUS ECONOMICIS ET FINANCIALES FAMOSISSIMUS PER INCOMPETENCIA ASTRONOMICA ET CUPIDITAS INCORRIGIBILIA IN SCANDALO SUB-PRIMO TOXICUS ET RESPONSIBILIS PER MAXIMI LOSSI CORPORATI IN HISTORIA MUNDI (XXVIII BILLIONES LIBRA APPROXIMO) SED AMASSAVIT FORTUNAM PERSONALIAM GRANDISSIMAM INCLUDENS GIGANTICUM PENSIONEM (MMMMM ETC.) ET BONUS VASTUS (MMMMMM ETC.) ET REFUSAVIT REDONERE SINGULARIS DENARIUS AD PUBLICUM UNIVERSALITER ACCLAMATUS "TERRIFICUS CROOKUS. STRINGIMUPUS" GAUDEAMUS, SIR FREDUS!

© The University of St Andrew Neil (formerly Brillo Polytechnic, Fifeshire)

THE BROON-ITES
THE EGREGIOUS EEJITS OVER-EGGING THE ECONOMY!
Fountain and Jamieson
NAE SOILED WORKCLOTHES OR FRED GOODWINS ON PREMISES
THIS CANNAE GAE ON, ALISTAIR...
SIR FRED
DAILY JOCK GOODWIN IS A SCUNNER - SAYS MAN
THE JOCK GOODWIN GETS LALDY ON HIS HOOSE
JOCKSHIRE COURIER CLAMJANFRIE OOT FER GOODWIN'S BLOOD
BROON ALE
THESE BANKING SCUNNERS HAE TAE FIND A WAY TAE MAK' 'EMSELVES MAIR POPULAR!
DINNAE FASH, PA BROON. THERE'S ONE WHO'S ALREADY FOUND A WAY TAE MAK' HISSELF VERRA POPULAR INDEED...
HURRAHS AND HOOTS! WHIT'S HE DONE?
DISAGREED WI' YOU, OF COURSE!
JOCKSHIRE ARMS
JINGS, CRIVVENS AND HELP MA BAILOUT!
M. KING
HENRY DAVIES



ME AND MY SPOON

THIS WEEK

SIR ALAN SUGAR

Sir Alan, what was your first spoon?

I wasn't given fancy spoons to stick in my mouth or anything like that no I found my first spoon in Finchley High Street, it was all rusty, so I cleaned it up and sold it in the market for half a crown so don't tell me about spoons sonny I know what you're trying to do I can read you like a Janet and John book but when you try and read me I'm like the Encyclopaedia Britannica I flogged those as well door to door round Islington that area so…

Sir Alan, may I bring us back to the subject of spoons, do you have perchance a favourite spoon?

You can't have favourites in the spoon game matey, you've got to be tough, focused and committed right, once you've picked a favourite you're facing a gorilla with nothing but a banana to protect yourself and I'm not the kind of gorilla who you want to mess with without a banana…

I'm terribly sorry, Sir Alan, I seem to be having some problems following your metaphor…

You're fired!

NEXT WEEK: *Gerald Scarfe – Me and My Scarf.*

MP IN NEW CLAIMS SCANDAL

by Our Housing Staff **Phil Boots**

A LABOUR MP was last night in the centre of a political storm when a number of his recent claims were questioned.

Mr Tony McNugget had in the past year claimed:

a) **"I am not greedy."**

b) **"I am not dishonest."**

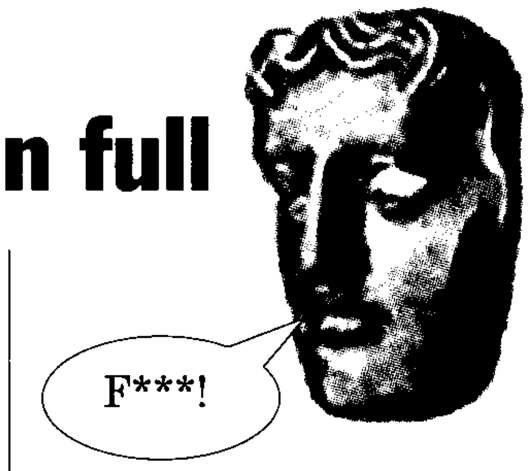
c) **"I am not a liar."**

Speaking from both of his homes, Mr McNutty said, "These claims are perfectly within the rules of being a politician. Everyone makes them and it is unfair to single me out. Now, if you'll excuse me, I have got urgent business at the House... my third house... Whoops!"

Those BAFTA nominations in full

The BBC has put forward several of its prestigious performers for this year's Bafta awards (British Academy of F*ing Television Arts)**

- ☆ **Award for Best Improvised Abuse To Pensioner: Jonathan Ross**
- ☆ **Award for Best Presenter Suspended For Bringing BBC Into Disrepute: Jonathan Ross**
- ☆ **Award for Best Paid And Least Repentant Presenter: Jonathan Ross**



The nomination cites Ross's "cutting-edge incisive interviewing technique", as instanced in the following:

Ross (to David Cameron): Is it true that you wank every night over pictures of Sir Keith Joseph?

Ross (to Gwyneth Paltrow): Fancy a shag?

Ross (to Tom Cruise): Can I lick your bum, Tom, before you return to outer space? *(Is this right? Ed.)*

DODGYSTATESMAN

NOW ON SALE

Guest-edited by **Alastair Campbell**

- **In this issue**
  Stuff I've copied off the fucking internet
- **Not in this issue**
  Suzanne Moore

WARNING: You have 45 minutes to cancel your subscription.

EXCUSIVE TO ALL PAPERS

WOMAN QUITS TV SHOW

On Other Pages

- Photos of woman sitting on sofa presenting TV show which she will no longer present.
- Photos of women thought likely to replace woman presenting TV show on the sofa sitting on other sofas presenting other shows.

NEW FILMS

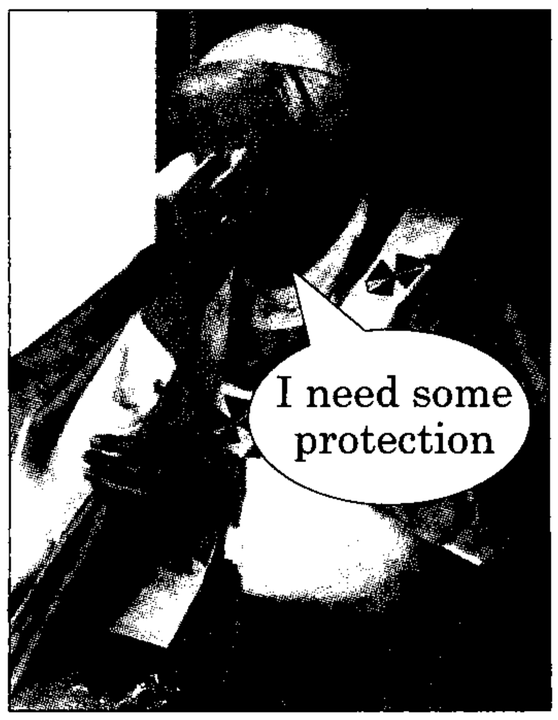
Lesbian Vampire Killers

A GROUP of innocent lesbian vampires go for a quiet holiday in Norfolk to try and escape from all the television programmes featuring Horne and Corden – only to find that the stars of Gavin and Stacey and Horne and Corden are also in the same film as them.

Try as they might, the lesbian vampires can't kill off the resilient comic duo, who insist on coming back to life to terrorise Britain with their amusing double-act.

Eye Horror Rating: XXXXX

ANGER AT POPE CONDOM SPEECH



the PREMIERSH*TS
PAUL WOOLEY
LIVERPOOL ARE RIGHT BEHIND MAN. UTD
YEH, BUT IT'S ALWAYS BEEN OBVIOUS THAT THIS SEASON'S TITLE WOULD BE WON BY THE TEAM...
IN RED!
MAN U. £650M DEBT
L'POOL £350M DEBT

Letters *to the Editor*

The Real Stalag Luft 3

SIR – The recent reunion of the veterans of Stalag Luft 3 has rightly focused yet again on the lamentable historical inaccuracies contained in the so-called film *The Great Escape*. Those of us who were there, as I was privileged to be, were to a man infuriated by this travesty of the facts.

For a start, the late Mr Steve McQueen was never an inmate of the camp, as portrayed by Hollywood. Furthermore, he did not possess a motorcycle capable of vaulting a six-foot barbed wire fence as he raced to freedom at the climax of the film.

Even more heinous is the scene showing a British officer addressing a crowd of other ranks as "you lot" – a vulgar expression which only came in in the 1950s. He would, of course, have addressed them as "you chaps". This anachronism exemplifies the complete lack of any proper historical research.

As for the tunnels, the idea that they were called "Tom", "Dick" and "Harry" is patently balderdash. The three tunnels, as I can vouch, were known respectively as "The M1", "The Hyde Park Underpass" and "Euro Tunnel".

For the record, it was to my eternal regret that I was unable to join those gallant comrades who took part in the subterranean escape. I was next on the list, but at the last minute I was disqualified by the Camp's acting medical officer on the grounds that I had been incapacitated due to over-indulgence in the excellent spirit distilled from local beetroots and acorns which was regularly served at meetings of the Escape Committee. I was deemed UFT (unfit for tunnel) and my place was taken by my old friend Squadron-Leader Frobisher, who, dressed as a nun, managed to reach the "safe haven" of Bruges, where an RAF light bomber was sent in to rescue him. But that is another film!

Wing-Commander Herbert Gussett UFT
The Old Hangover, Luft
St. Alag, Dorset

Exclusive To The Daily Telegraph

Scientists Solve Mystery of 'Déjà Vu'

SCIENTISTS say they have solved the mystery as to why so many Telegraph readers experience such strong feelings of *déjà vu* when reading their morning paper.

"It's because all the same features were first printed in yesterday's Daily Mail," said Professor *(cont. p. 94)*

PRICES SOAR AS DEFLATION KICKS IN

by Our Economic Staff **Anatole Katastrophsky**

AS I predicted only yesterday, the nightmare of inflation has been succeeded by the spectre of deflation.

Which is which? This is the question which is puzzling some of the world's greatest economists, including myself.

The answer is simple. Inflation is when prices are rising by 3 percent.

And deflation is the same.

Good night. Could I have my cheque, please?

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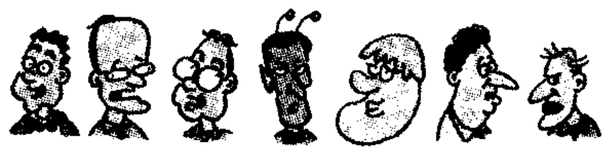
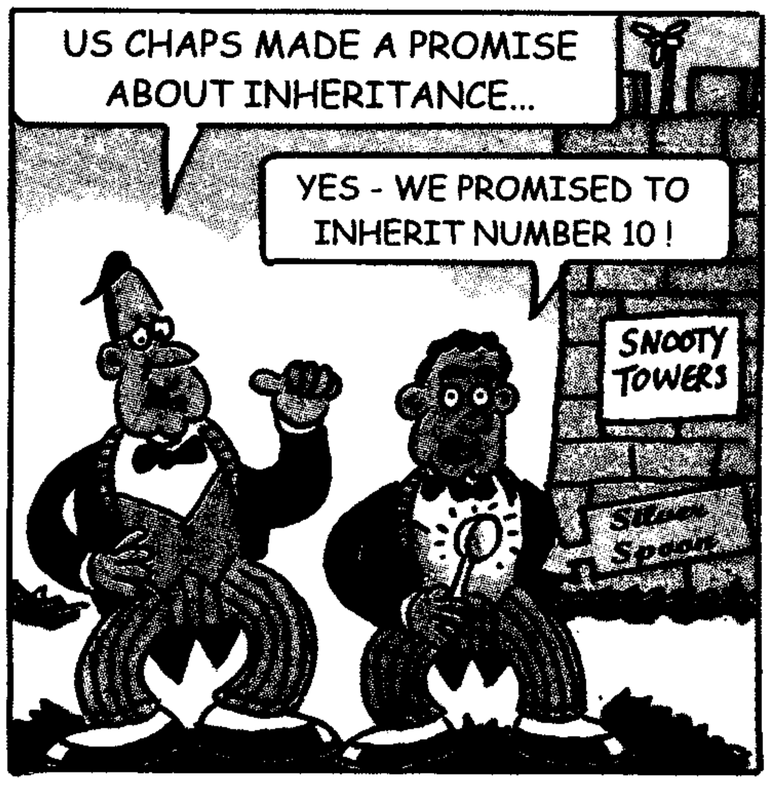
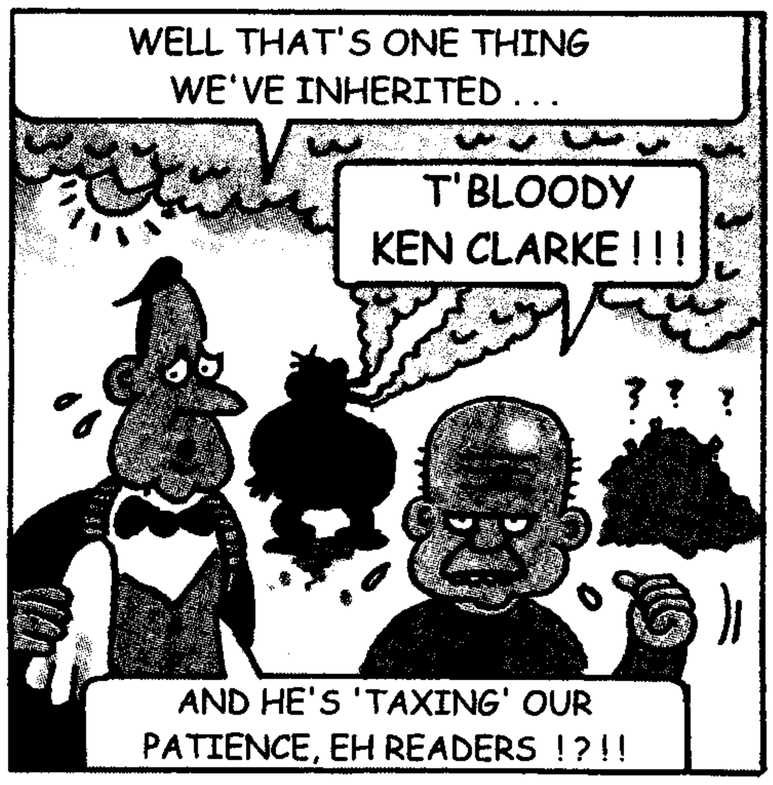
WOULD YOU LIKE A REVIEW OF YOUR FINANCES, AS YOU ARE GETTING A POOR RATE OF INTEREST CURRENDLY..
BUILD ING SOCIETY
AND WHOSE F'ING FAULT IS THAT?

Dave Snooty AND HIS PALS





THAT WASN'T A PROMISE... IT WAS MORE OF AN ASPIRATION...
WELL IT IS NOW YOU FAT CHUMP ! ! !
WHY CAN'T YOU KEEP YOUR BIG MOUTH SHUT, KEN? !
BECAUSE THEN I COULDN'T SMOKE ALL THE TIME !
HA! HA! PUFF! GAFFE! PUFF!



THE Sun
Friday, April 3, 2009

JADE GOODY STILL DEAD By Sun Staff

IN an incredible new twist to her roller-coaster story *(cont. inside)*

SHOW US YOUR GRIEF, MA'AM!

Fury Builds As Queen Fails To Honour Jade

by Our Entire Staff

It's business as usual for Her Heartless Majesty

THERE was growing outrage last night as the Queen maintained her week-long silence over the death of Jade Goody.

Many of the world's leading figures have already paid their respects to the reality TV superstar, from Gordon Brown and David Cameron to Sir Stephen Fry himself, who went out of his way to issue a personal statement via Twitter.

Respect

But, as the entire nation united in grief, from Buckingham Palace there has been nothing but a resounding silence.

In former times, the passing of a national figure of Ms Goody's stature would have been marked by the monarch with a month of court mourning.

Palace officials would have been expected to wear black. All Royal engagements would have been cancelled.

And the flag over the Palace would have been lowered to half-mast.

Grief

Yet, what has happened? With chilling insensitivity to the feelings of the people, the Queen has carried on her official business as if nothing had happened.

Not only did she receive the Governor of the Bank of England, but she was seen laughing and joking at a race meeting in Uttoxeter.

Said one angry mourner, Ms Denise Wetherspoon, a 25-year-old mother of three, as she queued to place her floral tribute on the mountain of flowers outside Ms Goody's home, "the Queen should be made to come out on that balcony and forced to cry in front of the entire nation. It's the least she could do to pay her respects."

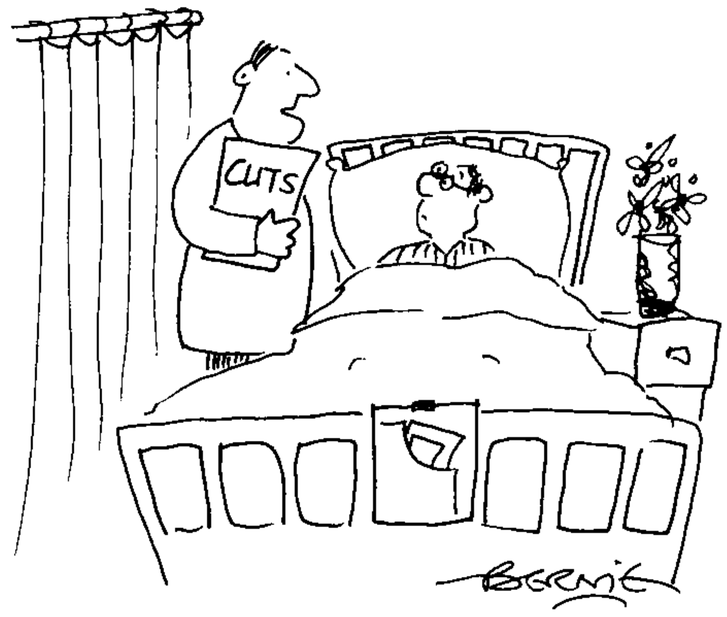
Police chiefs warned of possible "civil disorder" and even a possible "nuclear outrage" if the Queen continues to flout public opinion and *(cont. p. 94)*

ON OTHER PAGES

Sun writers ask:

- **Why isn't there a state funeral for Jade? 2**
- Come on, Elton – give us "Goody in The Wind" **3**
- **Where are the plans for the Jade Memorial Gardens? 4**
- Should Good Friday become Goody Friday? **7**
- **Did the Duke of Edinburgh murder Jade? asks Mohamed al Fayed**

(That's enough. Ed.)



"I'm afraid we're going to have to let you go..."

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I have been a reader for ..... years and I have never before been so offended as by your tasteless coverage of...
Please cancel my subscription at once.

Signed.....

MAX CLIFFORD 'TO REPRESENT DAVID CAMERON'

by Our Showbiz Staff

FOLLOWING his successful appearance on the Alan Titchmarsh Show, the Conservative leader David Cameron has been approached by celebrity grief agent Max Clifford.

Said Max last night, "David is a natural. He is a very private person who has no wish to go on the Alan Titchmarsh Show and tell everyone how he's feeling, but I think he could have a big career as one of my stable of celebrity *(Cont. p. 94)*

"Remember folks, don't wind your windows down"

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Who are they – the wannabe winners of this year's Apprentice?

Kevin Twat, 23. Trouser-press Sales Executive, Swindon. Says: *"In my dictionary there's no word for second. Losing is for losers. It's winner takes the biscuit."*

Chantelle Byttche, 25. Nail Extension Entrepreneur, Solihull. Says: *"I don't take any prisoners. And if I do, I eat them for breakfast. 110%."*

Simon Aaze, 27. Phone Hygiene Manager, Croydon. Says: *"I shoot from the lip. I'm full-on, 24/7, 360 degrees of the year. Like it or lunch it."*

Sandra Kowe, 26. Paperclip Marketing Liaison Executive, Droitwich. Says: *"I'm not in this to make friends. I'm in it to make waves. And if people drown then that's the way the tough cookie crumbles."*

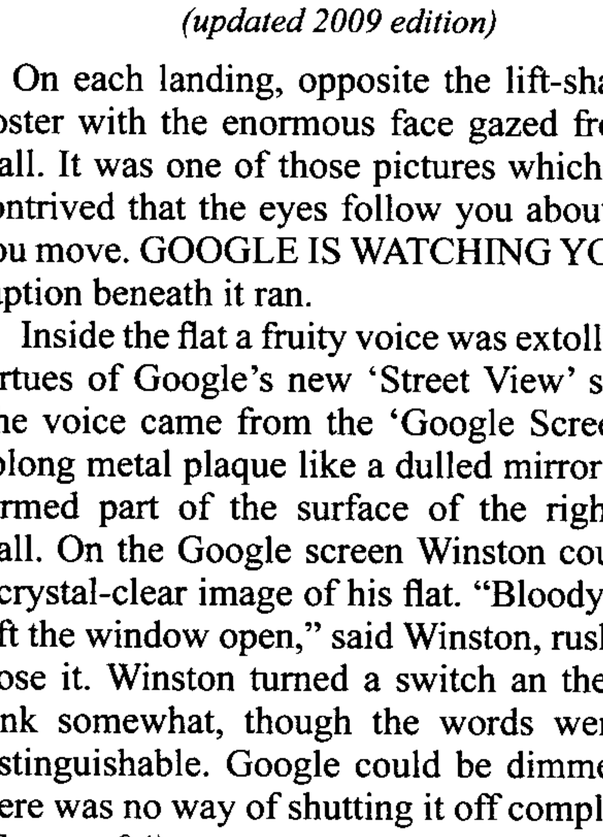
Colin Bollocks, 29. Ex-public School boy, Windsor. Says: *"Like, yah. Totally. Standard. I mean, let's do it. I'm fired."* (That's enough Apprentices, Ed.)

1984

(updated 2009 edition)

... On each landing, opposite the lift-shaft, the poster with the enormous face gazed from the wall. It was one of those pictures which are so contrived that the eyes follow you about when you move. GOOGLE IS WATCHING YOU, the caption beneath it ran.

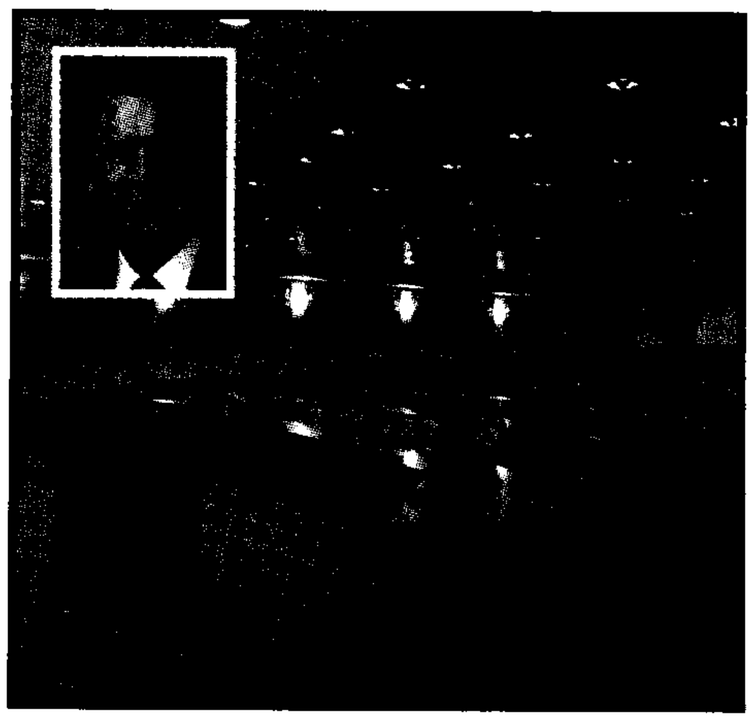
Inside the flat a fruity voice was extolling the virtues of Google's new 'Street View' service. The voice came from the 'Google Screen', an oblong metal plaque like a dulled mirror which formed part of the surface of the right-hand wall. On the Google screen Winston could see a crystal-clear image of his flat. "Bloody hell, I left the window open," said Winston, rushing to close it. Winston turned a switch an the voice sank somewhat, though the words were still distinguishable. Google could be dimmed, but there was no way of shutting it off completely...
(Cont. p. 94)



My Fair Lady Updated

"We're all going up to the big house to discuss the Squire's pension pot!"

GEORGE W.BUSH'S 'Thoughts on the Presidency' EMPTY LECTURE TOUR 2009



Book at www.georgedubyabushlectures.com

From The Message Boards

Members of the online community respond to the major issues of the day...

Attack on Sir Fred Goodwin's house

million's out of work ● penseon's an saving's "WORTH" nothin ● how can "SIR" Fred sleep at knight wile we lie awake wory-ing about a futur of povety ● an now jade goodie is a milionair ● ● ● – ***Broken_Britan***

Both Sir Fred and Jade are now unemployed, yet neither is a burden to the welfare state. They set themselves up for life and can afford to sleep soundly. And they did it all under their own steam. – ***Jon***

iss true jade done it all under her own self steam ● her self steam was low "BUT" then she got fame an it rased her self steam "BUT" then the freckle finger of fate give her cancer :-(an that give her a guilt egg chance to make money for her beutiful boy's :) jade you was a caring person like me and not like Karen Matthew's – ***Caring_Karen***

Jade Goody did no more than make a spectacle of herself before the nation. Then she did no more than make a success of herself before the nation. Then she did no more than change her wicked ways and raise awareness of cervical cancer before the nation. Inasmuch and insofar as she did so do, then she did no more than Saint Paul. – ***Mr_Salmon***

do'nt think jade is a sent but she was georgous :) y dont they change the name of SENT GEORGIAS DAY ● to AB-SENT GEORGOUS JADE :) it wil put a smile on r face's an help razor wareness for cancer – ***Binny***

the canser charety say's mor girl's report-ing curvicle canser thank's 2 jade? but y r they thank-ing jade if she ws spred-ing canser 2 girl's? – ***Hayley_321***

gobless jade ivan baby p rest in pea's – ***Darling_Deneyze***

jade u don nothing for maddie ivan baby p an all the other victim's ● i hope ur readin this in hell an I hope ur kid's die so u know wat its like ● but not of cancer I wuldnt wish that on my wirst enemy – ***Justice_4_Maddie***

Great stuff guys! – ***Bogbrush***

"But this is fantastic, professor! It's like no language I've ever seen before"

DIARY

CHRIS MOYLES

Er er er er I tell you what and er right yeah right well where were we right I tell you what you should've seen the arse on that bird yeah do yourself a favour and take a big long look at the arse on that tart that was one helluvanarse and you should er take it from me because like I've been a birds arsewatcher like all my life man and er boy and I tell you what and er right yeah right well I tell you what you should've seen the arse on that bird I'm not kidding it really was as I say one helluvanarse and after a few beers down the local boozer I'd have half a mind right to go up to her and say, like, wanna come make to my place or shall we just do it here because I'd need a few beers in me to go on a shagathon with a bird like that I can tell you now where were we yeah that's right, er, yeah, that's right, er yeah, I tell you what let's take a look at the old time on the clocky-wocky and from where I'm sat it's the big hand at seven no I tell a lie it's the small hand at seven and the big hand at twenty or roundabout twenty so by my reckoning that makes it eight twenty and er listen by the way do you know what, we have this er er er er er er er er what d'you call it what would you call it now we have this well thing kind of thing in the studio it's a CD yeah that's it a CD stands for Compact thingy or something or other Compact Digital or some such and so where was I yeah that's right we got this Compact Digi-whatever in the studio and it's the new one from er the er the er the er the guys if you can call them that from Westlife so there you go and we'll be playing it for you in er literally one or two minutes time that's two lots of sixty seconds to those of you out there who are like mathematical geniuses and yes I know one of them Westlife blokes is a bit how's-you-father, a bit shall we say limp of the wrist not to put too fine a point on it to coin a phrase so if he ever comes into the studio I'll certainly be minding me back and by the way let's have no complaints of homophobia from all those Julians and Walters and Ronalds in the posh newspapers because really I mean er can't they take a joke just having a bit of a giggle and what's wrong with a bit of a giggle in these hard times that's what I say even if the gay godfathers are out to silence me by like putting a dead gay horse in my bed or something but there you go as I say we'll be playing the new CD from Westlife on the programme and whoops I just shat myself no I didn't only joking that's another joke guys J - O - K -E you know the thing what makes you laugh so don't get your knickers in a twist about it it's tongue in cheek though er I wouldn't like to get my tongue in their Westlife's cheeks and that's a fact but anyway time's coming up to seven thirty and anyway er er er er yeah right er er er did you see that show last night on television Sky was it either Sky or ITV I forget or was it BBC could have been either anyway it must've been one of them I forget but er er er er right er er right er did you see that show last night on television bloody genius it had that bloke off *Only Fools and Horses* no I tell a lie it had that Jodie Marsh, blimey what a bloody slapper you can say that again what a bloody slapper whoops I just did and she was there in the studio with that bloke off *EastEnders* I forget his name er er er er big tall bloke no it's gone and anyway the two of them were sat there in the studio like lemons or whatever and where was yeah er that's right what were we talking about yeah well anyway Jodie Marsh what a slapper I mean I don't even much fancy her is the honest truth I think I fancy a couple of lagers down my local more than I fancy her a lot more to be honest blimey has someone just blown off in here have they someone's just farted in my studio phwar that's a really smelly one that is a right stinker and no mistake oooh could someone open a window someone get off their great fat arse and open a window and er yeah er yeah I can't get over how bad that stench is really bad I'm like this must be one of the stinkiest stinks that's ever been stank and I tell you now it is my intention to get to the bottom of it to coin a phrase cos you can't go around my studio making bloody great blow-offs without expecting a bit of repercussion from myself I mean I like a bloody good fart as much as the next er man but there's like they say time and place for everything and I don't I repeat don't want people blowing off in my studio as you know I'm an easy going kind of a guy but I'd have to have balls of steel to want to hang around in a pongy studio and no mistake so now the time's coming up to seven thirty nine and what's the weather doin' outside don't ask me because I'm inside so stop asking your stupid bloody questions or I'll go and give your little sister a good seeing to if you know what I mean and that's a fact coming up later in the programme what've we got yeah right er let's see let's see er er er er er er er er we've got er er er er oh yeah that's right I was going to tell you about what happened to me yesterday I promised I'd tell you about what happened to me yesterday do you know what I was just having a few lagers down my local right with some mates all very nice all very respectable when this bloke this bloke there's this bloke nice bloke what comes in and this nice bloke what comes in as we're having a few lagers down the local just me and some mates right and this bloke great big bloke comes in and he says to the barman I'll have a pint and so we get talking and eventually he says to me are you that Chris Moyles and I say right first time mate and he's literally gobsmacked he can't believe he's stood next to this total bloody mega-legend his words not mine and he's like the thing about you Chris is you're just an ordinary bloke like the rest of us you don't give yourself er er like airs and graces you're not all stuck-up like a lot of them are so we sink a few pints and have a bit of a like chinwag and I'm like well that's my style really you know like I'm just like an ordinary bloke cor did you see the tits on that one she could give Jordan a run for her money and we all have a bit of a laugh and that and that's basically like what happened to me er er er er yesterday then I went home and had a takeaway pizza with extra cheese and very good it was very tasty I'm just hoping the person who cooked it wasn't gay not that I've got anything against members of that particular fraternity though I bet they'd LIKE me to have something against them if you know what I mean but let's not go there do you know what and you probably know this already but I'll say it anyway you should've seen the arse on that bird it was like er er er er er er er er er...

As told to

CRAIG BROWN

I STILL CAN'T GET OVER DEBS CLIMBING KILIMANJARO FOR COMIC RELIEF...
YEAH, HOW WAS IT, DEBS?
THE WHOLE THING WAS AWESOME, BARRY... NOT JUST ACTUALLY CLIMBING TO THE SUMMIT..
BUT REALISING WHEN I GOT THERE HOW CELEBRITIES LIKE ME CAN NOW REACH OUT AND CONNECT WITH PEOPLE IN THE MOST AMAZING WAYS...
IT'S THE HIGHEST POINT IN AFRICA WHERE YOU CAN GET A MOBILE SIGNAL...!
SHE PHONED THE NEWS TO EVERY EDITOR IN HER ADDRESS BOOK!

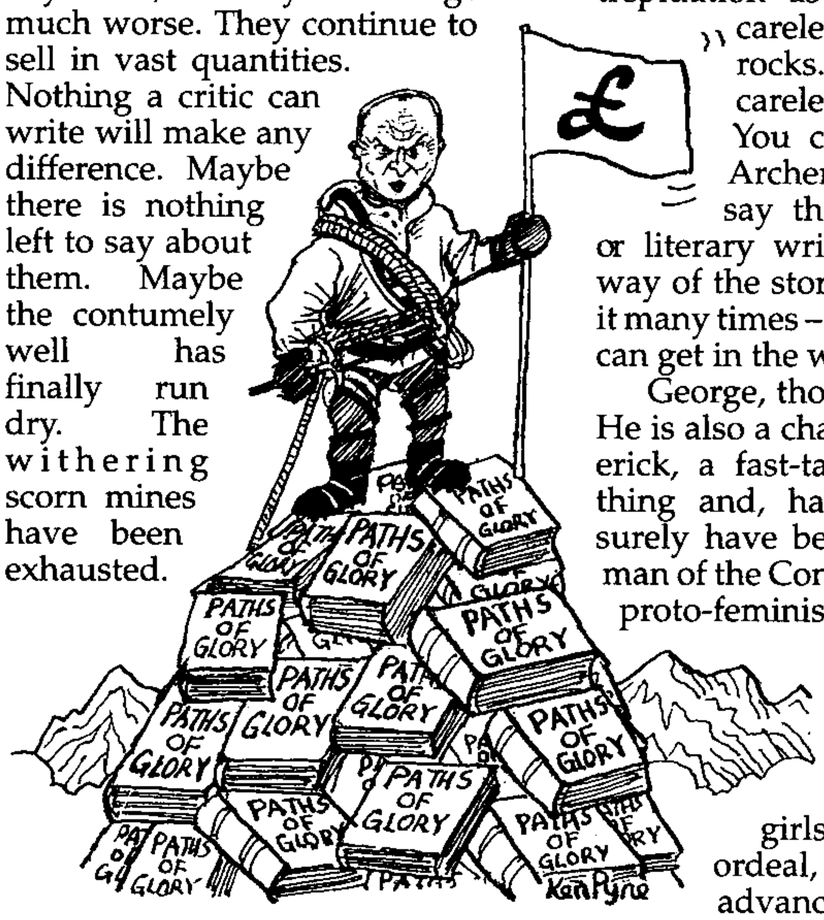
Literary Review

Summit of achievement

Paths of Glory
Jeffrey Archer
(Macmillan, £18.99)

WHEN a writer has written so many great books that we run out of ways to be nice to him, we might say, reaching for the only cliché left, that he or she has "exhausted his superlatives". Then there's Jeffrey Archer.

What else is there to say about his terrible books? There have been so many of them. They never get any better, and they couldn't get much worse. They continue to sell in vast quantities. Nothing a critic can write will make any difference. Maybe there is nothing left to say about them. Maybe the contumely well has finally run dry. The withering scorn mines have been exhausted.



In which case, Jeffrey Archer will have won. Possessed of terrier-like tenacity, the World's Worst Author will simply have outlasted his enemies, worn them away with his unrelenting mediocrity. For we know that nothing can dent that carapace of self-regard. Anybody else who had been found out and humiliated as often as he has been would retreat into repentant solitude, or at least give a second thought to what he had done. But Jeffrey is tougher than that. DNA testing would surely reveal that he is intimately related to the cockroach. If nuclear holocaust were to consume us all, you can be certain that a year or so later another thumping Jeffrey Archer novel would appear in the ashes of bookshops, and sell 100,000 copies, even though there was no one left to read them.

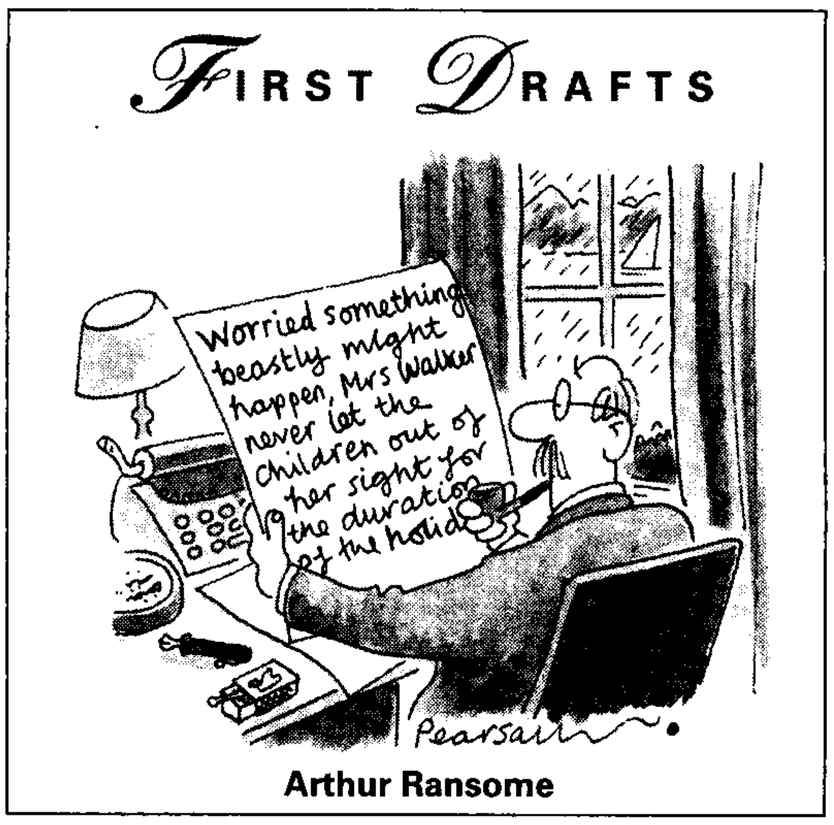
Paths Of Glory is "inspired by a true story", unlike many of the things he has said over the years. It is the tale of George Mallory, who may or may not have successfully climbed Everest in 1925, but certainly died there. We begin at St Bees in Cumbria, where family Mallory are on holiday. Out in the sea young George sees a rock, so he has to wade out and climb it, even though the tide is coming in. "His father was now watching with some trepidation as the waves surged carelessly around the rocks." Can waves surge carelessly? Can anything? You careless waves, you. Archer would doubtless say that so-called "good" or literary writing can get in the way of the story – indeed, has said it many times – but pisspoor writing can get in the way of everything.

George, though, is without fear. He is also a chancer, a bit of a maverick, a fast-talker, does his own thing and, had he lived, would surely have become deputy chairman of the Conservative Party. As a proto-feminist, he asks his stuffy parents why his sisters can't be privately educated. "His mother scoffed. 'Why put girls through such an ordeal, when it would not advance their chances of securing a suitable husband by one jot?'" (Try saying that sentence out loud.)

George travels the world, looking for things to climb. In Paris he climbs the Eiffel Tower. In Cambridge he climbs the wall to get into Magdelene, because someone has shut the door on him. Every time he climbs anything, Jeffrey gives us a big fat hint about what's going to happen at the end of the book. "As always, the descent was going to be more difficult than the ascent." Geddit? Mallory did get to the top, and then died coming back. He is not just signposting it. He is announcing it with bugles and flags and subtitles for the hard of thinking, over and over again.

There are signs in this one, though, that Jeffrey believes he is writing literature. After a climbing accident, in which George and two friends nearly lose their lives, he ends the chapter thus: "It had only taken a few minutes before all three climbers were safe, but each of those minutes could have been measured in sixty parts, and then not forgotten for a lifetime."

There are more adverbs than usual, and a notable increase in earnest circumlocution. Maybe this is Jeffrey's bid for the GCSE syllabus at last. (A new section on "How Not To Write.") But surely it's a page-turner? Once you start, you have to finish? Strangely not. So daft and schematic are George's adventures, so dreary are the characters, so abject is the dialogue and so numerous are the shoddy anachronisms (did 19th-century clergymen often accuse their sons of being in "denial"?) that each page you turn feels like lifting an anvil. Indeed, *Paths of Glory* is eminently putdownable. After that it's unpickupable. Very nearly the perfect combination.


FIRST DRAFTS
Worried something beastly might happen, Mrs Walker never let the children out of her sight for the duration of the holid
Pearsall
Arthur Ransome

Books & Bookmen

■ THE delightful Amazon, purveyor of print to those who shop through screens, has decided that in these troubled times what the publishing business needs is a good fleecing.

With little sense of irony it gave publishers a deadline of April Fool's Day to decide whether they wanted to receive their share of the already deeply discounted prices two weeks earlier than usual – with a further 2 percent deduction for the privilege – or to wait twice as long for full payment.

Grumbling has commenced, "thuggery" has been mentioned and publishers, already feeling the pinch, can look forward to yet leaner cash-flows in May and June. We wait to see who's the fool.

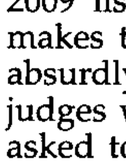
■ FIVE of the so-called "contenders" for the 2009 Man Booker International Prize, including Britain's James Kelman, are from Europe, and four from North America. So it's hard not to see box-ticking tokenism in the choice of one candidate apiece from Africa (Kenya's Ngugi wa Thiong'o), Asia (India's Mahasweta Devi), Latin America (Peru's Mario Vargas Llosa), Australasia (Peter Carey) and the Caribbean (VS Naipaul, classified in the press release as "Trinidad/India", though usually seen as "Trinidad/UK") to complete the elite recently chosen by Jane Smiley, Amit Chaudhuri and Andrey Kurkov.

To go by country of origin is to understate the list's western-centredness, as of the 14 only the Calcutta-based Devi is resident outside the two dominant continents – Carey lives in New York, Naipaul in Wiltshire, Vargas Llosa mostly in London, and so on.

Is Kelman really Britain's strongest challenger for a £60,000 prize intended to rival the Nobel? Is Devi, a little-known octogenarian responsible for "20 collections of short stories and nearly 100 novels", India's (indeed all Asia's) number one? Are EL Doctorow, Evan S Connell and Joyce Carol Oates, the mystifying US choices, better than Don DeLillo, Cormac McCarthy and Philip Roth?

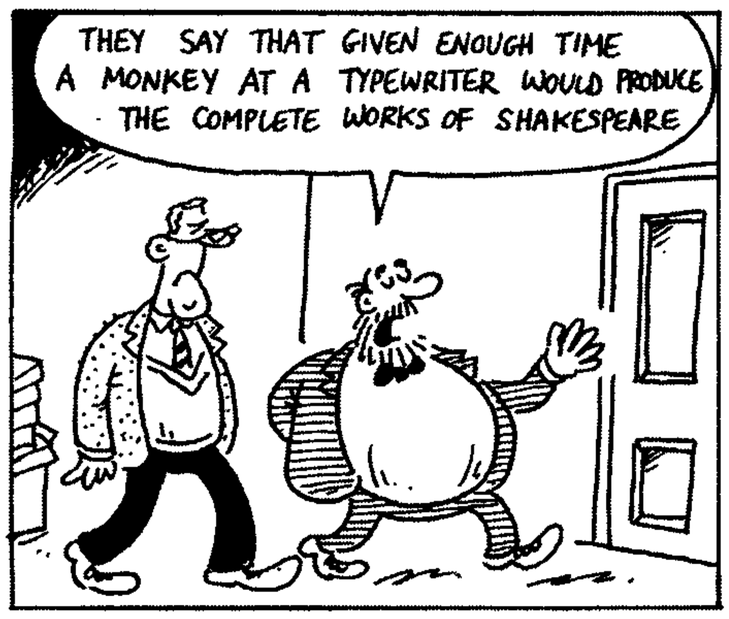
Among those who would chorus "no, no and no" are the biennial prize's 2007 judges, as Carey and Alice Munro are the only authors they picked who reappear on the 2009 list – a lack of overlap that makes the judging process appear absurdly subjective. Either the 2007 judges were dolts, we're implicitly asked to believe, or their contenders (who included Roth, DeLillo, Margaret Atwood, Ian McEwan, Amos Oz and Salman Rushdie) have suffered such a slump over the past two years they've been relegated from the global premier league in favour of the likes of Devi, Connell and the Czech writer Arnost Lustig.

The Man Group, the hedge fund that sponsors the various Booker prizes, is unlikely to be thrilled by the way an award meant to have weighty prestige has come to seem ridiculously capricious.



REMAINDERS OF THE DAY

■ ALASTAIR Campbell's *The Blair Years*, published in 2007 at £25, on sale in the Brighton branch of The Works at £4.99.



■ BUSILY plugging his memoirs, Stanley Johnson has been at pains to assure interviewers of one big difference between himself and his famous sprog Boris.

"The answer is no," he splutters when asked if he was unfaithful during his marriage to Boris's mother, Charlotte. "Totally absurd… complete garbage."

This echoes Boris's famous reaction to allegations of an affair with Petronella Wyatt ("an inverted pyramid of piffle… complete balderdash"), and is no more convincing. Has Stanley forgotten the happy hours he spent discussing Ugandan feminism with Germaine Greer?

■ NOT many novels get reviewed in the *Sun*. In fact, not many books of any kind get reviewed in the *Sun*. But on 20 March it found space for a glowing review of Jane Moore's *Perfect Match*, which has just come out in paperback.

"A rollercoaster ride of operations, revelations and secrets coming out of the woodwork," raved Natasha Harding. "There are difficult choices to make and the strain almost breaks the couple. Another brilliant read from the *Sun* columnist."

Newspapers tend to look fondly on books by their columnists, of course, but the indulgence afforded Moore by the *Sun* is quite remarkable. Not only did it serialise *Perfect Match* when the hardback was published, last June, but Harding reviewed it back then as well. ("A rollercoaster ride of operations, revelations and secrets coming out of the woodwork… Another brilliant read from the *Sun* columnist." Sound familiar?)

Meanwhile the author herself modestly mentioned in two recent columns that it was a Tesco Book of the Month, and ran a big photo of herself promoting the novel at a supermarket checkout. Does she have something over weirdo editor Rebekah Wade?

P.S. LORD ARCHER needs help. This time he seems to have forgotten how many editions of *Kane and Abel* have been printed and is asking, through his website, for "a Coronet UK edition dated 1989, 1991, 1992 or 1993, or a HarperCollins UK edition, dated 1994 or 1995". If anyone happens to see them lying around, do let Jeffrey know.

'Bookworm'

The Swift has flown

Making an Elephant: Writing from Within
Graham Swift
(Picador, £18.99)

IT IS difficult not to believe that this scrapbook of old journalism and interviews – uncompetitively priced in the traditional Picador manner and destined to sell all of 2,000 copies – represents the end of something. But what exactly?

One thing the drawbridge might be slamming down on, alas, is Graham Swift's career as a writer of fiction, over which the critics have been shaking their heads these past ten years and more. In fact, the thorny question of what happened to old Swifty's once prodigious talent is one of the great puzzles of modern Englit.

Certainly the books have got harder to write. The Booker prize for *Last Orders* (1996) was followed by a seven-year gap spent labouring over *The Light of Day* (2003), a murder mystery with all the mystery taken out, and another four years frowning over *Tomorrow* (2007), whose element of suspense was blown on page 152, leaving the reader to wonder what point the final third of the book was intended to prove.

At least *Making an Elephant* looks as if Swift might have had some fun writing it, but that doesn't make it any the less irritating or inconsequential. The irritation turns out to take three forms. First there is that inconsequentiality. No doubt the literary life is a source of inexhaustible fascination to those living it, but does anyone really want to a read an 18-year-old article from the *Daily Telegraph* about the experience of appearing at the literary festivals or hear about the mess that the American film director Stephen Gyllenhaal made of *Waterland*?

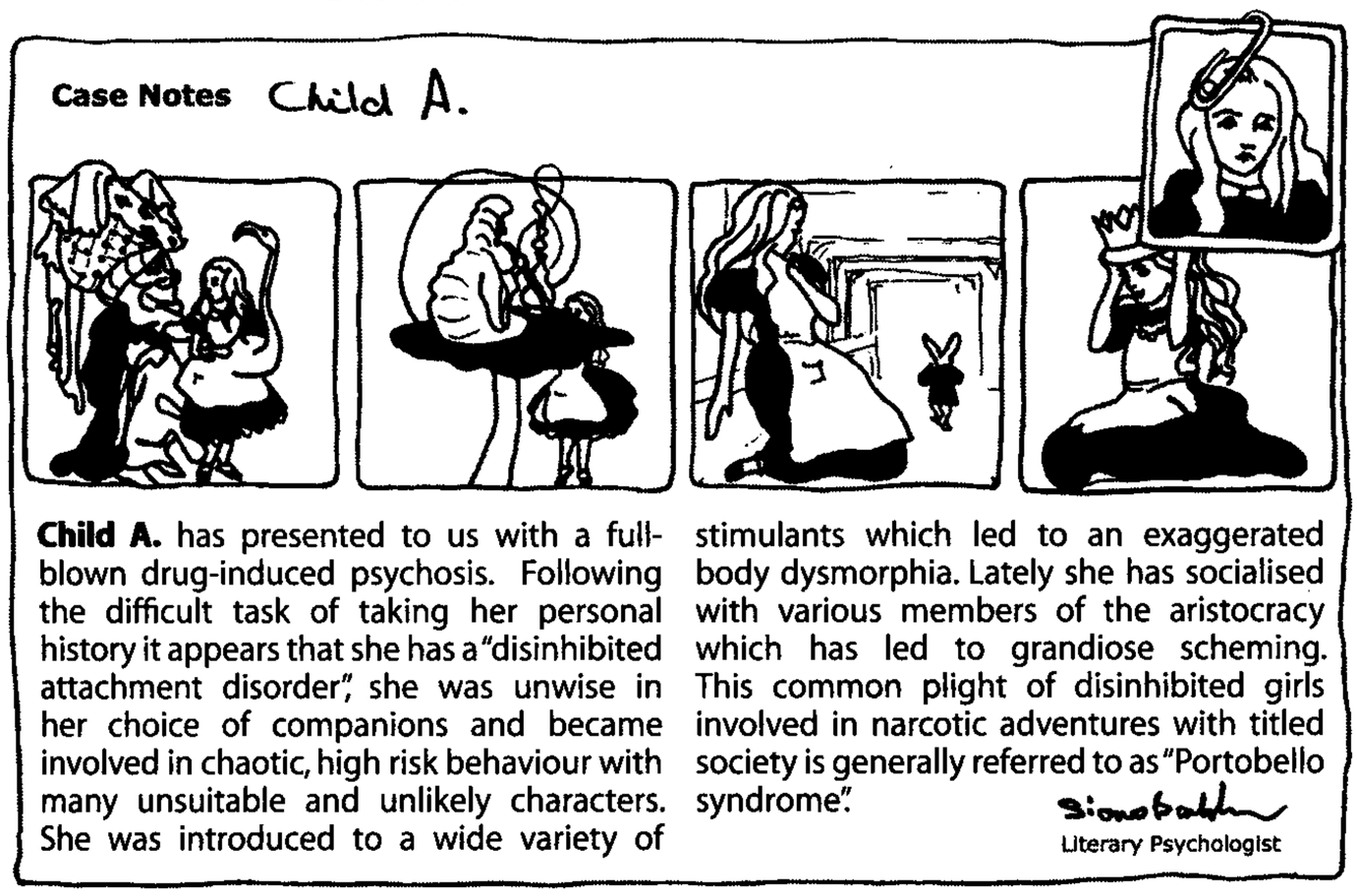
Second, and even more disabling, there is the tremendous air of literary luvviedom that hangs over proceedings. It is not just that Swift regards his art with an altogether painful seriousness, but that most of his friends seem to be writers too. So we go off on guitar-buying excursions with "Ish" (Kazuo Ishiguro), we hang delightedly out all over the place with "Caz" (Caryl Phillips), fish for salmon with "Ted" (Hughes) and endure a series of excruciating-sounding Christmas dinners with "Salman" during his years on the run from militant Islam (Swift is scrupulously loyal here and allows himself only a single remark about Rushdie being, ah "dominant company"; but you can't help thinking that most of the guests would have preferred a brisk, solitary or at least Rusdhieless stroll in the heather.)

Third, there is that terrible, and at times almost anguished, introspection about the business of being a writer, with which at least half-a-dozen of the pieces are liberally suffused. When did I know I was going to be one? Was I subconsciously resisting the impulse? Where do I go to write? How – gasp – do the books get written? "How they begin really is a mystery to me," Swift tells an interviewer at one point. "Usually, when I'm asked, what I would say, which is half true, is that it's something small. A novel is a very big undertaking, but I don't have a big idea." And so un-illuminatingly on for another ten pages, with the reader wanting to yell out: *for God's sake, just sit down and write the bloody thing*.

Where *Making an Elephant* redeems itself, on the other hand, is in its memorialising: a heartfelt tribute to Alan Ross, who gave Swift his first break in the *London Magazine;* an evocative piece about his father and the early days in Sydenham; a paean to the somewhat occluded beauties of Wandsworth. The clump of poems that turns up half-way through (they "just happened" in the gap between novels) have a similarly reflective air.

In the end, though, the scent of elegy with which the book comes drenched has nothing to do with Swift's dad, the war-time pilot, or his grandparents' house on Sydenham Hill. Rather, it takes in that whole gang of late fiftysomething writers whom Swift grew up with – Ish and Salman and Mart and all the others – almost none of whom has written a decent novel for years and whose reputations date back to the days of Mrs Thatcher's premiership.

One could go even further, and say that the whole idea of the "literary novel" – that ornate, refined and self-conscious artefact in which these boys specialised – is dying on its feet, snuffed out by genre and reader indifference: the kind of book that Swifty used to do so well, but which now seems more or less beyond his grasp.



Child A. has presented to us with a full-blown drug-induced psychosis. Following the difficult task of taking her personal history it appears that she has a "disinhibited attachment disorder", she was unwise in her choice of companions and became involved in chaotic, high risk behaviour with many unsuitable and unlikely characters. She was introduced to a wide variety of stimulants which led to an exaggerated body dysmorphia. Lately she has socialised with various members of the aristocracy which has led to grandiose scheming. This common plight of disinhibited girls involved in narcotic adventures with titled society is generally referred to as "Portobello syndrome".

Literary Psychologist

MUSIC & MUSICIANS

MUSIC companies are dumped by sponsors so often these days it scarcely draws attention. And when the sponsor is a banker – well, what did you expect?

But there's cause for comment when the dump involves a breach of contract, on a project the sponsor had initiated in the first place, and the sponsor has not only cultivated a careful image of himself as God's gift to giving but has lectured the rest of us on how to do it.

Banker John Studzinski, a dazzlingly rich but devoutly Catholic supporter of good causes, addressed 1,000 movers and shakers in the world of charitable giving just a few months ago on how to face the downturn with integrity and decency. His speech was scathing about butterfly philanthropists who do the dinners and write the cheques but whose commitment is superficial.

Interesting, then, that he's pulled the rug from under Tête à Tête, the admirable small-scale opera company that he himself called "brilliant, innovative" when his Genesis Foundation started funding it two years ago. Widely acknowledged as a shoestring miracle – "our most inventive and unconventional laboratory for new opera", according to the *Telegraph* – Tête à Tête duly reorganised itself around the Genesis Foundation's money. And when the foundation asked it to get involved with a composer called Jean-Philippe Calvin, who was planning an opera on Ionesco's *Bald Soprano*, Tête à Tête naturally agreed.

The piece was workshopped. It was scheduled for a London premiere this autumn. And, according to stated contractual terms, it was to be funded by a Genesis grant of £150,000, which represented 90 percent of the production costs.

Last week Genesis pulled out, giving vague excuses about problems with performance rights. And Tête à Tête is left high and dry, with no money, no show and a huge gap in its autumn schedule.

Trying to be philosophical, a Tête à Tête spokesman acknowledged that there had been a "personality clash" between sponsor and composer, along with "real issues over the rights. But that's a pretext. We can understand why John Studzinski's pulling out of things: he's probably lost a lot of money recently. But given that this project came from Genesis – they asked us to do it, we've done as they asked, and it was their part of the deal to secure the rights – it's graceless of them to withdraw support from Tête à Tête as a result."

As Studzinski told the audience of movers and shakers: "Fair-weather friends will melt away but those who care most passionately about your work will stand by you to the end and see you through this period."

'Lunchtime O'Boulez'

Pseuds Corner

You have also made a series of works in which foam froths out of the orifices of ceramic forms. What lay behind these?

Obsessive-compulsive activities when younger may play a part. I was concerned with hygienic environments. The foam was perhaps psychological – both a banality and a continual cleansing of its environment. CJD [Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease] at the time played a part: there was a question of whether people of my generation might lose their mental subjectivity, and have their psyche violated.

There is also something sexual there, which is more explicit in your recent semen-covered light bulb pieces.

Yes, I'm aware of potential masculinity in my work but I want profound ambiguity, profound indifference. By applying semen to the gallery lighting I filter the light through a very specific medium – my semen – to fundamentally change the nature of the light.

Interview with ROGER HIORNS,
Art World

Discharge's 1982 debut Hear Nothing, See Nothing, Say Nothing was voted the greatest punk album ever in a Terrorizer magazine poll. Today, the Stoke-on-Trent anarchists' relentlessly punitive music retains the on-beat precision of German techno, the filthy fretwork of Motorhead and the righteous fury of a fundamentalist cell. Sadly, the new vocalist, Tony Rat, is required to articulate more complex critiques than his predecessor, Cal Morris, who could reduce the most troublesome political issues to brayed haikus, but with unemployment on the rise and the imminent seizure of domestic power by an Etonian cabal, Discharge's once dated indignation couldn't seem more appropriate.

STEWART LEE reviews Discharge's 'Desensitise', *Sunday Times*

Illuminations: Class Identities and the Contested Landscapes of Christmas

In the last two decades, illuminating the outside of a house with multi-coloured lights has become a popular British Christmas practice, typically adopted within working-class neighbourhoods and thus producing a particular geography of illumination. This article explores how such displays have become a site for class conflict mobilised around contesting ideas about space, time, community, aesthetics and festivity, highlighting how the symbolic economy of class conflict moves across popular culture.

TIM EDENSOR and
STEVE MILLINGTON, *Sociology*

So, she's gone – and No, it isn't right or fair. In the days since Jade died it feels like the energy has somehow been sucked out of the air.

CAROLE MALONE,
News of the World

CONTRIBUTORS: Hugh Stoner, Mrs P.M.S. Thorpe, David Turner, Frances Templeton.

£10 paid for all entries

IN THE BACK

THE BABAR AHMAD CASE

Hush money

THE Metropolitan police tried to buy "terror suspect" Babar Ahmad's case out-of-court days before his successful claim against them for the way he was beaten and abused when arrested in 2003, *Private Eye* has learnt.

Mr Ahmad, a former university IT officer from Tooting, south London, refused the deal, and the Met was forced to change its plea and accept his claim that the "anti-terror" raid on his home had involved "serious gratuitous prolonged unjustified violence", even referring some of its officers back to the Independent Police Complaints Commission.

The case also unearthed papers showing that six of the arresting officers faced a total of 77 complaints of abuse against mostly black and Asian men.

Days before Mr Ahmad's civil action was due to start, the Met offered him £60,000 but with no admission of liability. Had he accepted, none of the abuse evidence would have been aired.

Sir Paul Stephenson, Met police commissioner, is now accepting some very serious abuse charges. As has been widely reported, Mr Ahmad's civil action said Territorial Support Group officers continued beating him long after he was restrained. One suggested he would "remember this day for the rest of your life, do you understand me, you fucking bastard" while he was being choked in the police van after his arrest.

The police tried to keep evidence out of court in other ways. Many of the officers involved in the arrest refused to give statements or testify. The police commissioner could have ordered them to appear, but didn't.

Other evidence simply, er, went walkies. Mr Ahmad's lawyers asked for the arresting officers' notebooks but these "disappeared". They also asked for six cassettes of interview tapes with one officer. These disappeared too. Mr Ahmad's lawyers also won a court order for the police to produce evidence of other complaints against the arresting officers. The police promised "several large mail sacks" in response, but these disappeared while being driven in from Hendon.

The disappearance of the mail sacks may have put paid to the police claim of innocence, which they have kept up for the past five years. Justice Holroyde found the disappearance "startling". The commissioner accepted his officers had attacked Ahmad shortly after the judge persistently pressed their lawyer about the papers.

Private Eye asked the Met why it did not instruct officers to speak in the case. A spokesman replied: "We consider this matter closed."

The belief that Mr Ahmad was linked to terrorism partly explains the police assault. For example, during the assault case, it emerged from police statements that a sergeant called Davis had briefed officers before they arrested Mr Ahmad, telling them he was connected to al-Qaeda, had trained in terrorist camps and was the leader of a south London terrorist group.

Davis was said to have compared Ahmad to Kamel Bourgass, who stabbed a policeman to death in 2003 during an anti-terror raid. The aggressive nature of the arrest is thus partly explained, though not excused, by this briefing. One arresting officer is reported to have said: "So this one's the tough nut, is he?" as Mr Ahmad was hit. In fact Mr Ahmad had no history of violence, was fully compliant and did not resist arrest in any way.

The belief that Mr Ahmad is linked to terrorism also lies behind the extradition claim. After holding Ahmad for seven days of interrogation, searching his house and seizing his computers, the British police released him without charge in 2003. However, he was rearrested in 2004 on a US extradition warrant, as the Americans seem convinced – like police sergeant Davis – that Ahmad is indeed linked to terrorism. As the *Eye* has reported, the US extradition claim relies almost entirely on evidence found in the British raid – evidence that British authorities felt would not support a trial, let alone a conviction.

While Sergeant Davis briefed the arresting officers who raided Mr Ahmad's home, the sergeant had himself been briefed by two senior counter terrorism officers: a Detective Chief Inspector Boutcher and a Detective Inspector Wanless. DCI Boutcher was later the "Silver" commander, or second-in-charge, in the Met control room when John Charles de Menezes was shot. DI Wanless briefed officers on the arrest of Lotfi Raissi, who was accused of direct involvement in the Twin Towers attack, a charge which was not true.

Brief encounters

BABAR AHMAD may have won his assault case, but he still remains in a high security jail were he has been held since 2004, fighting extradition to the United States. The two cases are separate with different legal teams, but nevertheless they are related (see *Eyes passim*).

The police raided Mr Ahmad's home in 2003 because they believed his involvement with an Islamist website was cover for organising and funding terrorism. The website, Azzam.com, favourably reported the "mujahedin" battling in Bosnia, Chechnya and Afghanistan from the mid-1990s on. This became controversial after 11 September 2001.

PRISON DEATH

Day for fight

THE parents of Paul Day, a police informant who died in jail (see *Eyes* 1173, 1175 and 1188), have vowed to continue their fight for justice after the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) decided not to bring charges against prison officers involved in his case.

Despite an 18-month police investigation into the circumstances of Day's death, the Director of Public Prosecution (DPP) decided last week there was insufficient evidence for a realistic prospect of a conviction. The DPP had considered a number of charges including murder, gross negligence, misconduct in public office and perjury.

Day, 31, from Essex, was found hanging in his cell in the segregation unit of Frankland prison, Durham, on 2 October 2002. He was nearing the end of an eight-year sentence for attempted robbery and had acted as a police and prison informant in a number of cases. Day's parents say their son decided to stop informing shortly before his death because he had come to believe some of those he had helped to convict were innocent. After that, they say, the police and Prison Service withdrew the protection he had previously enjoyed.

The jury at his inquest – the longest ever into a death in custody – concluded that Day had been driven to take his own life because prison staff did nothing to stop other prisoners abusing him, and because of other systematic failures in his care. The government made a substantial payment in 2006 to settle a civil claim over the death brought by Day's parents.

PLANNING

Starbucks stops here

STARBUCKS could have its planning wings clipped if a bitter spat over one of its eight Brighton cafés goes against it at a public inquiry in June.

The world's largest coffee chain bought the premises of a former bookshop in Brighton's kooky Kemptown last May and applied for change of use from A1 (retail) to A3 (café) despite loud opposition. Brighton council threw the application out, but Starbucks opened regardless and is still open nine months later, despite a petition of 2,500 residents and traders; a council enforcement notice requiring it to take out all tables and chairs; and a weekly protest from determined campaigners.

However, Starbucks has appealed against the original planning decision and the enforcement notice. A company spokeswoman insisted the new store "has helped its community by creating around 14 new jobs".

Now Starbucks faces a public inquiry on 10 June, which could have wider implications for the company – which has a habit of opening shops without planning permission. Starbucks believes it has found a legal loophole, whereby if the status of a store is unclear under planning law, catering outlets can open in former retail premises without obtaining a change in classification.

The chain uses this loophole regularly, then appeals against planning decisions that don't go its way at the last possible moment, thereby gaining six months' trading grace until a hearing is held. With subsequent appeal hearings against council enforcement notices, the process drags on, leaving it free to trade for anything up to two years.

In Hertford, Starbucks operated for more than a year without planning permission, applying for it a second time this January. Again it didn't have permission for a coffee shop and simply claimed that it would seek full planning permission – and that it was helping the community by employing 14 people, as in Brighton.

In September 2007, Reigate council was furious after a Starbucks opened before getting permission to change from retail to café use. Councillor Adam De Save said the company had shown "total disregard for the planning system". And Harrow council accused it of seeking "back-door" authorisation for its branch in Pinner High Street in February 2008, which also opened with only retail permission in the premises of a former bookshop.

If the public inquiry goes in Brighton's favour, Starbucks CEO Howard Schultz, already facing the closure of 300 stores worldwide on top of 660 last year, could find his recent disparaging remarks about the UK economy being in a "downward spiral" apply just as well to his own empire.

NHS IT

Yeah but no, Minister

THERE's something about being put in charge of the most disastrous computer project in British history, the NHS National Programme for IT, that drives even the saner government ministers round the bend.

Questioned by the Commons health committee in March, health secretary Alan Johnson rounded on critics of the programme.

"There have been issues with that contract but it might be good to clarify them because there is so much utter drivel talked about this such as we underestimated the cost of the contract," he stormed. "No, we did not. In 2006 we estimated that it would cost £12.4bn and the latest estimate is that it will cost £12.7bn. That is the kind of margin that anyone would expect and in fact is much lower than most people would expect; so we did not underestimate the cost".

There's just one snag with that line of argument: it deems the history of the programme to have started three years later than it did. Back in 2003 the then boss of the programme Richard Granger announced a cost of £2.3bn. It was only this relatively affordable price tag that enabled the programme to go ahead unquestioned. By the time the National Audit Office reported on the deal in 2006, the expected cost had hit £12.4bn.

As the pisspoor IT companies behind the deal are paid when they deliver (often disastrously – see *Eyes passim ad nauseam*), Johnson objected to the suggestion that public money was being frittered. "We have spent billions of taxpayers' money on this; we have wasted billions of taxpayers' money", his critics were saying. "No, we have not; we have spent £3.2bn," Johnson insisted. Mathematicians consulted by the *Eye* confirmed, however, that this is indeed, er, billions.

Meanwhile, more than five years into the programme the main software still hasn't been developed and the Department of Health has tendered for replacement suppliers should current dunderheads Cerner and iSoft be able to deliver. Back in December DoH chief executive David Nicholson said of the programme: "If we do not make progress relatively soon on this I think we are going to have to rethink it." Now he admits it's "critical". Time already, many think, to switch off the life support.

HIGH PRINCIPALS

Epping nuisance

THE JOB of principal at troubled Epping Forest College is such a poisoned chalice that the body representing college managers has cautioned members about applying for the post. Meanwhile, questions are being asked about the governance of the college.

The college recently dismissed Peter Sadler after four months in the job, meaning it will have had five different leaders in 15 months. Governors said they had "lost confidence" in his ability to do the job.

His brief tenure culminated in an "inadequate" Ofsted report – although the college was far below national benchmarks when he arrived. The sacking has been condemned as "football manager culture", with governors wanting instant results from the new man. The Association of College Managers says anyone considering the job should consult it first – the first time the association has ever intervened in recruitment.

But was Mr Sadler turning over too many stones in trying to tackle the college's problems? He told the *Eye* he had uncovered poor teaching standards and "hopeless" management, including the college losing hundreds of thousands of pounds on a failed capital project in 2006, which resulted in an expensive legal fight with the project management company.

Epping Forest's chair of governors is Roger Neville, a client partner at accountancy and business recovery giant Vantis. Despite his supposed business sense, the college has declared operating losses of more than £2m over the past two years.

Since leaving, Mr Sadler has written to the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), the further education funding body, asking it to carry on the investigations he had started. The LSC has promised to raise points with Mr Neville and seek assurances that the college is following the governance rules.

ONLINE SCAMS

Who you kidding?

"YOU were recently proposed as a biographical candidate..." begin the letters now dropping on to doormats around the country. "Individual achievement is what Cambridge Who's Who is all about."

Flattered recipients are then asked to send their information to the Milton Keynes-based *"Cambridge Who's Who"* in order to be listed in its "elite" registry.

But is it by any chance related to the *Cambridge Who's Who* based in Uniondale, NY, and featured on American consumer websites such as ripoffreport and scam.com in the past few years? Answer: Yes indeed. Same company, same website.

The US company and two previous incarnations, *Manchester Who's Who* and *Empire Who's Who*, have been exposed online by many disgruntled people who were persuaded to fill in the form. After sending off their details, the "candidates" report receiving phone calls hard-selling membership of the registry for more than $600 (£430).

In February crime prevention charity Crimestoppers warned Guernsey residents about the scheme, saying they should "ignore the letter and not visit the website, which may collect IP addresses and details for further scams". Since then, similar letters have been received from Ayrshire to Essex.

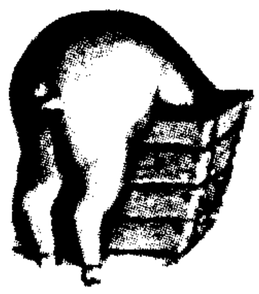
NUCLEAR JUNKETS

Power lunches

SENIOR civil servants at the new government department set up to oversee nuclear energy have been wined and dined 30 times by pro-nuclear companies at some of London's most exclusive restaurants since the department was created five months ago.

Energy companies, nuclear contractors, trade bodies, accountants, corporate strategists and legal firms have all taken the Office for Nuclear Development's chief executive, Mark Higson, and other senior staff out for much needed refreshment.

Bechtel, the engineering giant, paid for a reception at the Oxo Tower; Alstom bought dinner at Madame Tussaud's and British Energy entertained three senior civil servants at a Burns Night supper at the Caledonian Club. Meanwhile, a Dutch nuclear company partly owned by BNFL paid for drinks and dinner in the Netherlands.



The disclosure, under the Freedom of Information Act, comes as the government is drawing up its response to the public administration select committee's report on lobbying. The committee noted that "lunches are the kind of contacts which can be of as much potential concern as formal lobbying meetings on the record". In response to this concern, one of the committee's recommendations is that "gifts and hospitality" above a token value "received by ministers and all civil servants should be recorded and made publicly available".

PFI CASE STUDY: EAST LEAKE

Tied up in Notts

WHY won't the private finance initiative companies about to draw on the government's £2bn facility to keep the PFI gravy train on the rails lose any profit even though the arrangement means the taxpayer takes the ultimate risk on deals?

Treasury minister Ian Pearson (*Who he? Ed*) justified the sop in a parliamentary answer by claiming that "retaining the PFI structure will mean that the private sector will continue to bear the risk of cost over runs and delays".

Oh yeah? Try telling that to disgruntled visitors to the East Leake Leisure centre in Nottingham where Rushcliffe borough council is faced with doubling payments on a seven-year-old PFI deal or closing the centre down.

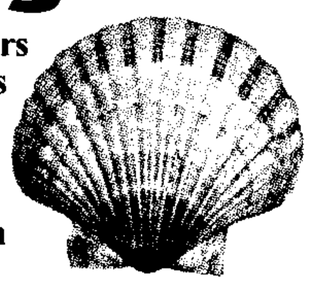
In 2002 the council acquired a new school and leisure centre in East Leake under a PFI contract with builder McAlpine. Although a pricey way of going about it, at least under PFI there shouldn't have been any nasty surprises. "McAlpine were also responsible for managing the leisure facilities on the site on the basis that this would be provided at no additional cost (other than the unitary charge [the PFI fee]) to Rushcliffe Borough Council," notes the council ruefully, "as it was believed that the operating costs would be no greater than the level of income the facility would generate."

But last year the deal was taken over by builder Carillion, whose lawyers quickly set to work poring over the smallprint. The firm is now seeking to exploit a break clause unless the council pays an extra £285,000 (including £75,000 additional management fees), almost doubling the annual bill to £637,000. The council pays less than £1m for all five of its other leisure centres put together.

Councillors have agreed to put up extra cash for six months while they haggle with Carillion (whose portfolio includes billions of pounds worth of hospitals, prisons, garrisons and GCHQ). If that fails, the leisure centre may well close. So that's what it means when the private sector takes the risk!

SCALLOP FISHING

It's dredge-ful



WELSH rural affairs minister Elin Jones appears out of her depth in her failure to end the scandal of scallop-boats ploughing up the seabed in Cardigan Bay.

Wales is out of step with the rest of Britain in protecting special areas of conservation (SACs), with scallop-dredging banned in Cornwall and Devon and off Scotland's west coast. Proper enforcement of the European habitats directive everywhere else has triggered the current unprecedented concentration of up to 50 scallop-boats in Cardigan Bay.

Accused by conservation bodies of failing one of the UK's two remaining bottlenose dolphin populations by not stopping round-the-clock scallop-dredging, Jones asked fisheries regulators in February to extend a temporary ban on dredging from three miles to six miles along part of the coast.

But most dredging is taking place well beyond the six-mile line, so large parts of the SACs would remain open to the trawlers, which use heavy steel-toothed dredges to churn up the seabed, killing crabs, lobsters and fish, and disrupting food-chains for dolphins. Jones and her officials cannot pass the buck on this, as the area beyond six miles out is not the regulators' responsibility, but the assembly government's.

BARCLAYS BANKERS

What a Charlie, Varley

"I DON'T recognise this statement that we have undertaken tax avoidance schemes," Barclays chief executive John Varley told the Treasury select committee a few weeks ago.

As a Barclays whistleblower has now leaked very clear details of several tax avoidance schemes to Lib Dem shadow chancellor Vincent Cable – never mind those reported in the *Eye* over the years – Varley was either deliberately misleading parliament or is woefully out of touch with what his own bankers are doing.

Either way, whether Varley can stay at the helm of a bank looking for taxpayer support through guarantees for its dodgier assets looks increasingly questionable.

Court short

WITH scores of tax scams on the go, which the leaked documents show are vulnerable to legal challenge by HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC), the little people might be wondering why Barclays never appears in the dock.

The last time the taxman took one of the bank's tax avoidance scheme to court was seven years ago, since when Barclays' "structured finance" brains have deprived the exchequer of billions.

The reason for the timidity is a series of big business-friendly initiatives from HMRC, of which Barclays has been a major beneficiary. The latest is a "high risk corporates" project which sees the taxman settle a range of disputes with the biggest tax avoiders out of court. Barclays recently came through the programme, under "Project Thames", unscathed.

While an official hard-nosed "litigation strategy" governs all other taxpayers, one senior HMRC director recently admitted that the high risk corporates project "sits above the litigation strategy". The idea is a softer approach for big business that HMRC tax boss Dave Hartnett says has "changed behaviours" – always a hopelessly naive idea further discredited by the revelation of multi-billion pound schemes executed by Barclays *after* getting the high risk corporates treatment a couple of years ago.

Now that one regulator, the Financial Services Authority, has recanted years of "light touch" and promises to make the City "very frightened", is it time for HMRC to rethink its own tummy-tickling of big business?

Slaughter & Payday

THE lawyers earning millions from Barclays' tax avoidance schemes over the years come from City firm Slaughter & May.

While helping to screw the taxpayer for billions, the same outfit has already earned a fortune from the taxpayer-funded bailout of the banks. S&M partners Nigel Boardman and Nilufer von Bismark were brought in to advise on the RBS and Lloyds TSB rescues. This month's National Audit Office report on the nationalization of Northern Rock revealed fees of £9.4m for the firm on that deal alone, bolstered by the hard-pressed lawyers charging 15 percent on top of their standard fees "to take account of the particular demands of Northern Rock".

As Barclays' dubious tax schemes are a big factor in the bank's negotiations with the Treasury over taxpayer support, the S&M suits advising the government might feeling just the teeniest bit conflicted.

PS: Even though Barclays is in talks about a government bailout to protect itself, charmingly it is still trying to make money by betting on the collapse of rivals via "short selling" on the stock market. Three times in January and February it notified the Stock Exchange of multi-million pound "short positions" on Provident Financial – the "Provy" being a UK bank that specializes in lending to poor people.

Cowboys and Indians

GORDON BROWN promises more regulation for British banks, but government documents show that development minister Gareth Thomas ganged up with Peter Mandelson to try to force deregulation in India and other developing world countries, following lobbying from Barclays.

Campaigners from the World Development Movement used the Freedom of Information Act to get minutes of government meetings with Barclays from 2007. They showed that officials from the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (BERR) and the bankers wanted the EU to put "financial services" at the top of Free Trade Agreements between Europe and developing countries. These agreements would stop poor countries imposing regulations on European banks such as Barclays. One email says that Mandelson, still a European commissioner at the time, was "on board" with the plans.

Another document shows the kind of regulations Barclays wanted to tear up. It says Barclays wanted to expand in India and Pakistan but there were "key barriers". These barriers included the fact that poor countries only gave foreign banks licenses on condition that the banks backed "microfinance" – loans to small businesses – or loans to the governments of the developing world themselves, in the shape of treasury bills.

The emails show that Thomas met Barclays and discussed this "market opening" with the bank. Thomas, a joint BERR and development minister, claims to be enthusiastic about microfinance in poor countries, yet he appears to have backed Barclays' attempts to circumnavigate it.

Barclays told *Private Eye* that it has "a track record of promoting financial inclusion in both the developed and developing worlds" and is "not lobbying the government on this issue".

NUMBER CRUNCHING

£100m Amount government was not prepared to offer Dunfermline building society in bail-out

£1,000m Amount government spent on management consultants last year

In the City

NO DOUBT all those attending this week's G20 photo-opportunity will be able to agree that tax havens are a very bad thing, and that there ought to be a law against them – except where that is neither politically expedient nor necessary, such as the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man or the US backyard of Delaware, home state of vice-president Joe Biden. These, of course, are not bad tax havens, but good offshore financial centres – like Gibraltar, where conman supreme Bernie Madoff hid $75m from his $60bn Ponzi scheme.

However, there is one undoubted tax and secrecy haven flying the Union Jack which may feature in more political minds than most – the Caribbean paradise that is the British Virgin Islands.

The BVI is home to a million mostly single-purpose companies that pay no tax, provide no accounts, need no auditors or shareholders' meetings, offer shares in anonymous bearer form, need only one nominee or corporate director and offer good-to-go formation within days – all for under £1,000.

Beneficial ownership is supposed to be disclosed to the local manager or agent, but not to the local financial services commission regulator who can, however, demand ownership information. That can be sidestepped by way of lawyers, banks or accountants in other secrecy havens claiming client privilege. A paradise indeed for those looking to hide assets or corrupt deals – or even the payment of informers, like the US authorities have been reported as doing!

This is perhaps why the Treasury made a visit in March as part of the Foot review of British offshore jurisdictions. Michael Foot, ex-Financial Services Authority md, is due to report later this month.

The BVI was the creator of the IBC, or "international business company", which it pioneered in 1984, since copied by all the Caribbean havens. (Ironically BVI has recently renamed all its IBCs simply "business companies" – the name changed to protect the guilty.) The IBC is to companies what the numbered or anonymous bank account is to criminals, a Kevlar shield against prying law-enforcement investigators or civil-action lawyers' eyes.

In the words of a leading London offshore company-formation specialist, the IBC is "easy to set up, has low maintenance cost, is confidential, has no filing requirements, is exempt from any taxation". A rival adds: "BVI incorporation documents do not carry the name or identity of any shareholder or director. The names or identities of these persons do not appear in any public record… Shareholder(s) and director(s) nominee services are allowed to ensure confidentiality of beneficiaries… BVI companies records and accounts do not have to be held or filed with the authorities. If the shareholders, directors or officers decide to maintain such records or accounts, these may be held anywhere in the world."

A BVI website promotes these advantages: "minimal regulations", "no wealth, capital gains or estate taxes", "asset security", "protection of wealth benefits", "legislative exemptions" and an "enlightened Financial Services Department (which has) maintained minimalist yet tight regulation to safeguard the integrity of the jurisdiction".

Clearly every home should have one. Which is why the growth of BVI offshore companies has been phenomenal, from around 300,000 at the start of the decade to 535,000 in 2002 and 852,000 in 2007 – a year in which more than 77,000 companies were formed. The figure is now believed to have passed the 1m mark. The greatest fans are Russia and, more recently, China – countries where tax evasion, flight capital and corruption are rife. For the issue with the BVI is not just tax but, more importantly, secrecy.

"Rest assured, madam, the Government will spend whatever it takes to protect taxpayers' money"

Remarkably, last year the BVI – population: around 28,000 – was the second-biggest foreign direct investor in China, investing almost $16bn – second only to Hong Kong and far beyond Japan or the US. Go figure who was really behind such huge sums and why.

There was a similar story in Vietnam, where the BVI was again second in the foreign direct investment league, behind Canada but ahead of Singapore.

But it is not just companies that the BVI offers. There is also the very wonderful and unique Vista trust, another BVI gift to the world in 2003. The Vista – Virgin Islands Special Trust Act – gets round the problem of the so-called "prudent man of business rule" for those who want to put the ownership of their companies into a trust for tax or inheritance reasons. Trustees have to be prudent and that could mean looking to sell the company or interfere in its management, to avoid or spread risk. So a special Vista trust can be created to enable assets in a BVI company to be retained for the family benefit and not sold by the trustees for a profit or to reduce risk.

The Vista trust circumvented the "prudent man of business rule", its BVI salesmen proudly declare, disengaging the trustee from management. BVI lawyers took the Vista trust on the road to presentations in London, New York, Singapore and Hong Kong. It was sold as a concept which had particular appeal to family-owned businesses in the Far East or Latin America. BVI lawyers boasted of its value in ensuring settlor control at last year's Offshore Alert financial due diligence conference.

This key advantage of the Vista trust, spelt out by a local BVI trust company, is that it was perfect "when the settlor (the individual establishing the trust) wishes to retain control because the trust can generally be structured so that settler control can be retained at the director (company) level".

However, critics of the Vista trust – even those in other offshore jurisdictions – declare that it is a sham because UK and US tax authorities would be more likely than not to look through or disregard any trust in which they could prove the settlor retained control. Normally the settlor has to forego that very control to independent trustees to make the trust tax effective. This can be avoided by assuming the role of protector or by letters of wishes dictating instructions to the trustees. But the risk of successful challenge outside the BVI does not stop the sales pitch from the BVI's legal finest.

In the past year the BVI has been looking to clean up its image. It signed tax information exchange agreements (TIEAs) with Britain and Australia last November. But these are only useful in exceptional circumstances, as a BVI government spokesman admitted: "I don't think the TIEA will have a massive impact. There has to be a significant reason for the agreement to be used."

A similar outcome, perhaps, to that of the mutual legal assistance agreement with the US, which was described a year ago as having generated one request in five years – and that was then withdrawn.

The BVI has also been imposing tighter restrictions on IBC/Business Companies. Bearer shares – the most effective way to hide ownership – will go next year. Evidence of ownership will need to be provided, but there are loopholes – such as accepting that the information is held elsewhere and will be provided. But the key advantages remain, as do the Vista trusts.

More information may be made available to the UK and US and others with a big stick. But just how much information on those companies and their bank accounts, usually in other havens like Switzerland, Jersey or Luxembourg, will be provided on the BVI's biggest customers – the Russians and Chinese – or those from developing countries in Africa, is likely to be a very different story. Unless, that is, the Foot report demands an end to secrecy and full co-operation and this is imposed by HMG – which is the law in the BVI.

But killing the goose that has laid so many golden eggs for the islands would leave them dependent on blue seas, white sands and the British taxpayer. Which is why they were encouraged to become an offshore financial centre in the first place – by the British government.

AMONG those who will be watching the G20 outcome with great interest will be prominent Tory party funder Lord (Michael) Ashcroft. His BB Holdings (BBH) owns the Belize Bank, which offers banking and company management services in the second-division tax haven of Belize but also operates in the Turks and Caicos Islands (TCI), the Caribbean tax haven recently put under direct rule from London after an inquiry into local corruption.

His now renamed British Caribbean Bank is the largest lender in the TCI. Sadly the bank was inadvertently caught up in the investigations by the Auld Inquiry as members of the deposed ruling political party were customers.

Ashcroft opened the bank in the TCI in 1999. It is run by his son Andrew. It has been a great success. In 2007 Ashcroft effectively personally

☛ *See over...*

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pumped $94m into the TCI bank by subscribing for loan notes issued by BBH which invested an extra $100m in the bank which had a loan book of $360m at March 2008.The bank assets in TCI were 41 percent of the group total.

The 2008 BBH annual report dwells on the success story of the TCI while complaining about modest growth, falling profits, bad loans and the "challenges" of the current political and economic climate in Belize, where Ashcroft has been attacked as an "economic vampire" by the ungrateful citizens of his adopted homeland.

Ashcroft has "Belonger" status in the TCI – acquired, it appears, in 2004 – which could open the door to perhaps a change in tax domicile of choice. The attractions of TCI are great. There is no tax on income, profits, capital gains or inheritance. Why should MA want "Belonger" status given that he already has UK and Belize passports? "Belonger" status not only gives freedom from any immigration restrictions but also "confers rights normally associated with citizenship, including the right to vote". It is also the equivalent of having a right of abode in the UK. All of which would be very useful if wanting to prove a domicile of choice in the TCI to the UK taxman.

IN uncertain times, government ministers need all the expert help they can get. Which may explain the surely fanciful suggestions that business secretary Lord Mandelson has been discussing with American money manager Jeffrey Epstein the new Obama administration and the new powers on Wall Street.

Nothing wrong with that. Except that last July Epstein began serving an 18-month prison sentence in Florida after pleading guilty to soliciting sex from underage girls as young as 14. Multi-millionaire Epstein – also a friend of Prince Andrew and ex-President Clinton – has been on day release from the Palm Beach county jail since October and so is available to meet and speak by telephone to friends. But it is surely too absurd to imagine that a British government minister would be talking to a jailbird. So these suggestions cannot be true.

THE enforced Nationwide/taxpayer rescue of the Dunfermline Building Society is another expensive own goal for the Financial Services Authority (FSA), which has regulated mortgages since 2004.

It had always regulated building societies but had paid little attention, considering them a low-risk area. They were overseen in theory by the Retail Firms Division. But often those in charge knew little about building societies or mortgages. The senior regulators too often came from other unrelated areas such as insurance or enforcement.

Confronted by ever-greater competition from the mutuals turned banks and "shadow banks" such as the big US-owned sub-prime/non-conforming loan originators GMAC, GE Money and Lehman Brothers, the old-line building societies were effectively encouraged by the FSA to "diversify or die". The old model of boring residential mortgages no longer worked. The new model was to go into exciting commercial-property loans, loans to housing associations and buy-to-let and self-certified mortgages. All businesses that building societies like Dunfermline knew next to nothing about. But that did not stop them piling in.

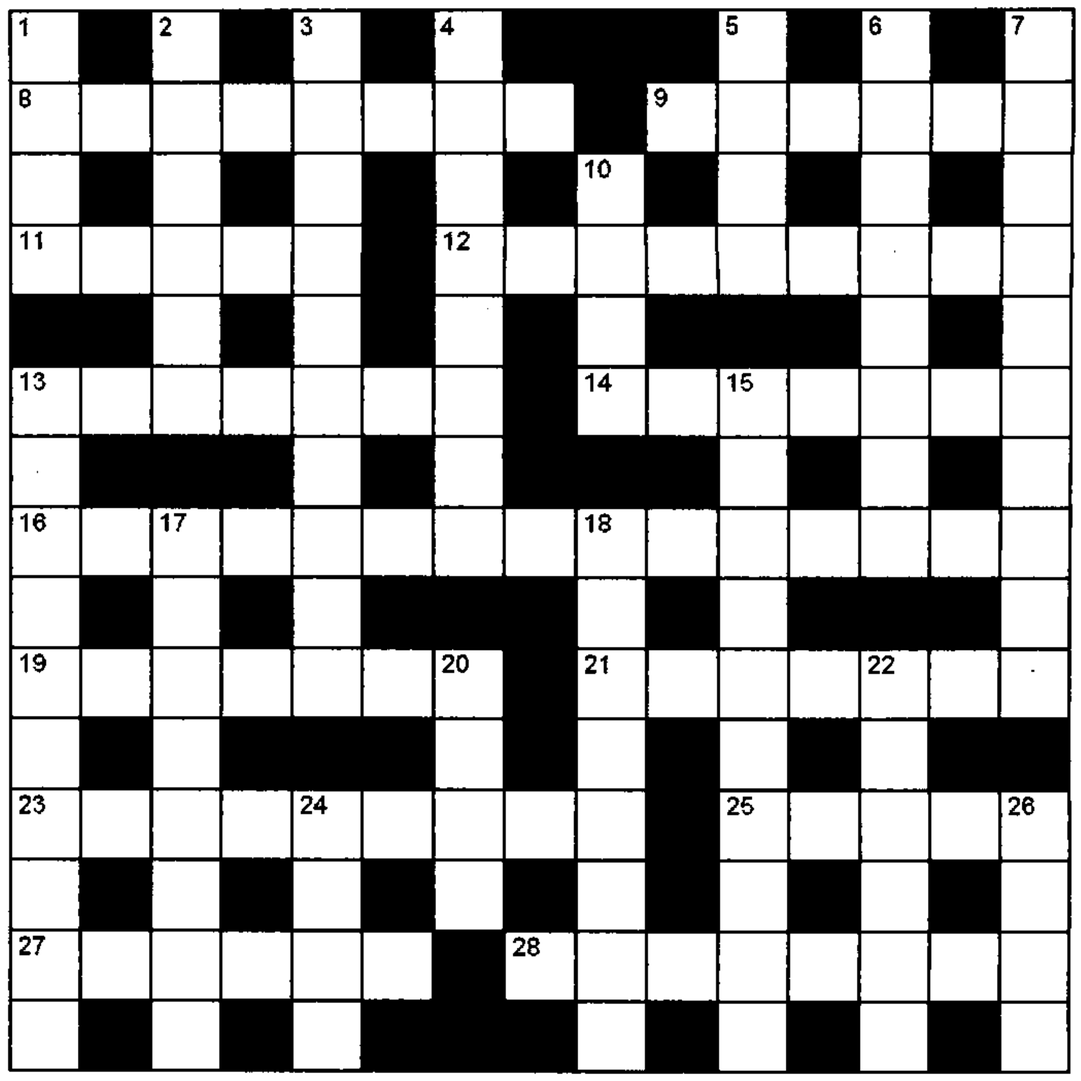
The result? Over £1bn of high-risk or bad loans built up in three years or less, just as the market first stalled then imploded. Books of toxic loans bought at the wrong price from originators like GMAC and Lehman, happy to find a bigger fool. The Scottish building society, like others in England that may yet also need rescue, became the fool in the market. Meanwhile the Fundamentally Supine Authority did not seem to understand or insist that Dunfermline needed more capital and bigger reserves for the greater risks it had taken on at the wrong price until it was too late.

Dunfermline therefore joins Northern Rock, Bradford & Bingley, Alliance & Leicester, HBOS and RBS in the roll call of regulatory failure for Gordon Brown and FSA chief executive Hector Sants.

'Slicker'

EYE CROSSWORD 388

by Cyclops



£100 prize to first correct solution opened on 8 April 2009

Entries to 'Crossword', Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1D 3BN or via email to crossword@private-eye.co.uk

ACROSS

8 As good as caught getting screwed, bathing, astride mate's rear (2,3,3)

9 State of old character hugged by two-way swinger (6)

11 Was a prostitute broadcast, treasure? (5)

12 Ear-piercer, flashy kisser (9)

13 Great artist's *Get Knotted, Sweet* (7)

14 End up with ad about genitalia (7)

16 Involuntary flash pictures of low-down paparazzi (2-3-5-5)

19 Description of native Australian's arse? (7)

21 Smashed, lugged around independent old luvvie (7)

23 Be combatative, covering hard protuberance in hair (4,5)

25 Salvation Army soldiers want the heart of Michael Palin? (5)

27 Gross Cyclops is getting a female name (6)

28 Ladies, say, grabbed by him, er, lost prize possession? (8)

DOWN

1/10 The act of taking on the bar results in such a bollocking? (4,4)

2 Fire on, gets pissed faster (6)

3 Sex act ... turn over, briefly ... sex act ... confrontation (4-2-4)

4 It prevents overflushing two bits of genitalia (8)

5 See 24dn.

6 "Philandering, Ecstasy-gobbling Di, no nun" slur (8)

7 Mean, pissed rat mounting date (5-5)

10 See 1dn.

13 Shaking tit and bum (half) to secure transport digitally (5,1,4)

15 Drug supplier hides small containers in log (10)

17 Time to hurry Blanchett? Cut! (8)

18 Rex starts to erotically gyrate (tries out roll) (8)

20 Urethra reflex housing excellent (4)

22 The way's restricted by idiot PM! (6)

24/5/26 Where you'd be comfortable as hot hoofer mom playing with Cyclops (4,4,4)

Crossword 387 winner: OWEN JONES

ACROSS: 8 Trial run 10 Split vote 11/7 Death threat 12 Colemanballs 15 Hand gun 17 Chennai 18 Credit crunch 23/2 Fidel Castro 24 Armadillo 25 Legacies 26 Effigy.

DOWN: 1 Prole 3 Ortega 4 Mandible 5 Breadline 6 In the shit 7 Tosh 9 Govern 13 Chock-full 14 Underdogs 16 Gridlock 17 Crummy 19 Claret 20 Codify 22/21 Tony Blair.

Sir, it's well past midnight and we found your son roaming the streets
Inside, now! Thanks officer, I'll have strong words with him
Did you get it?
Yeah, yeah, one gram of coke

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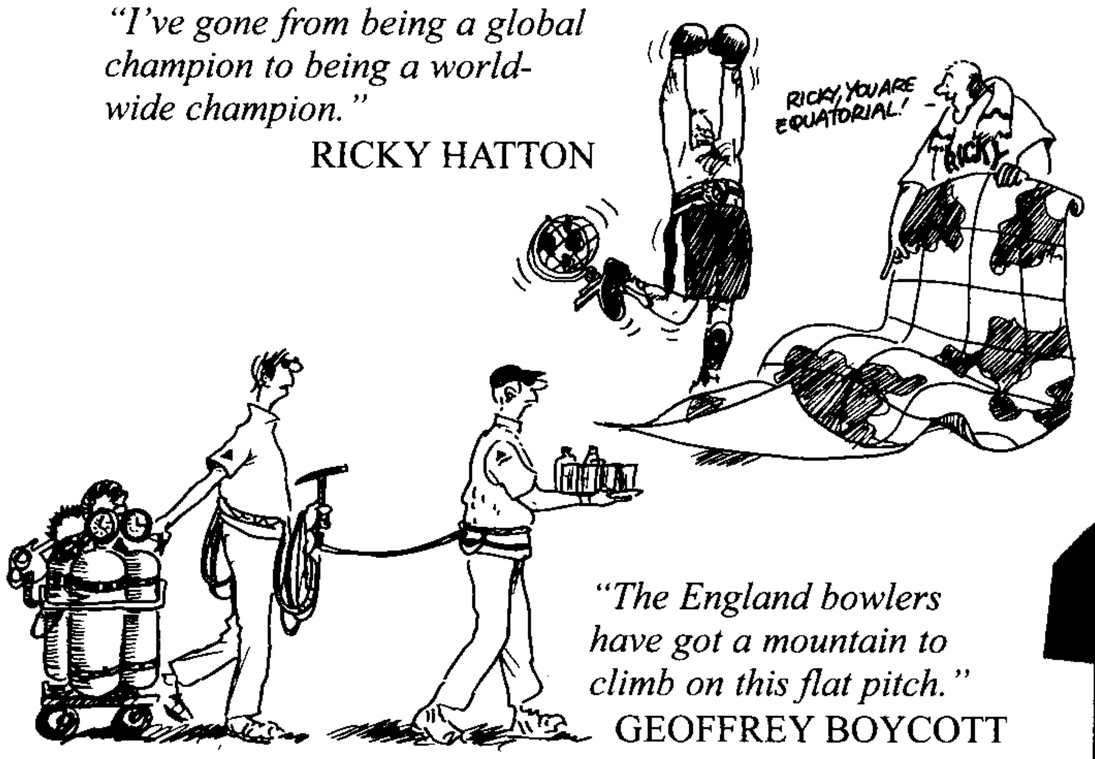
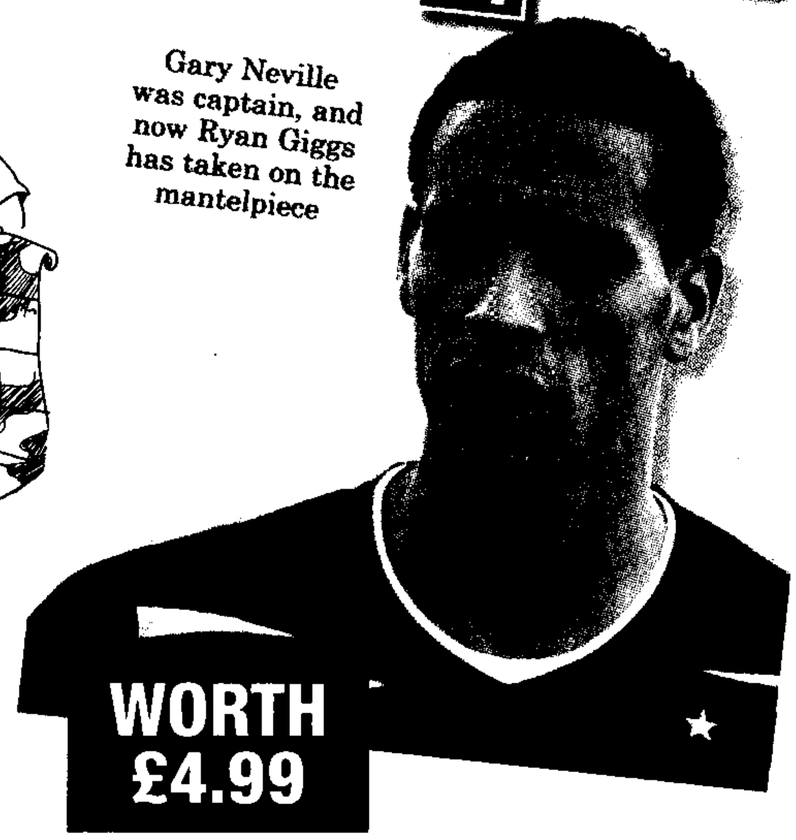


"The England bowlers have got a mountain to climb on this flat pitch."
GEOFFREY BOYCOTT



Gary Neville was captain, and now Ryan Giggs has taken on the mantelpiece

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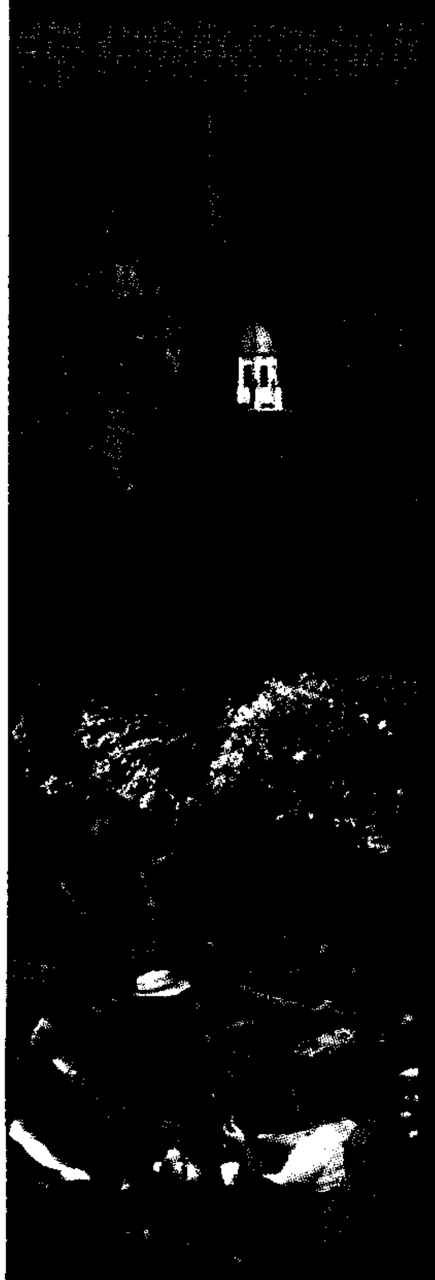

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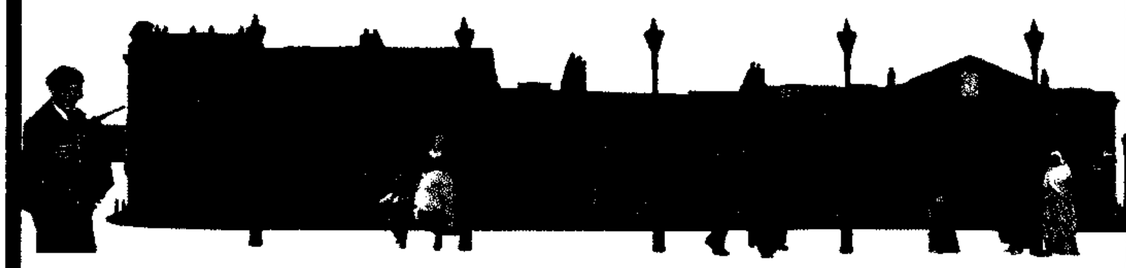
Financial Times



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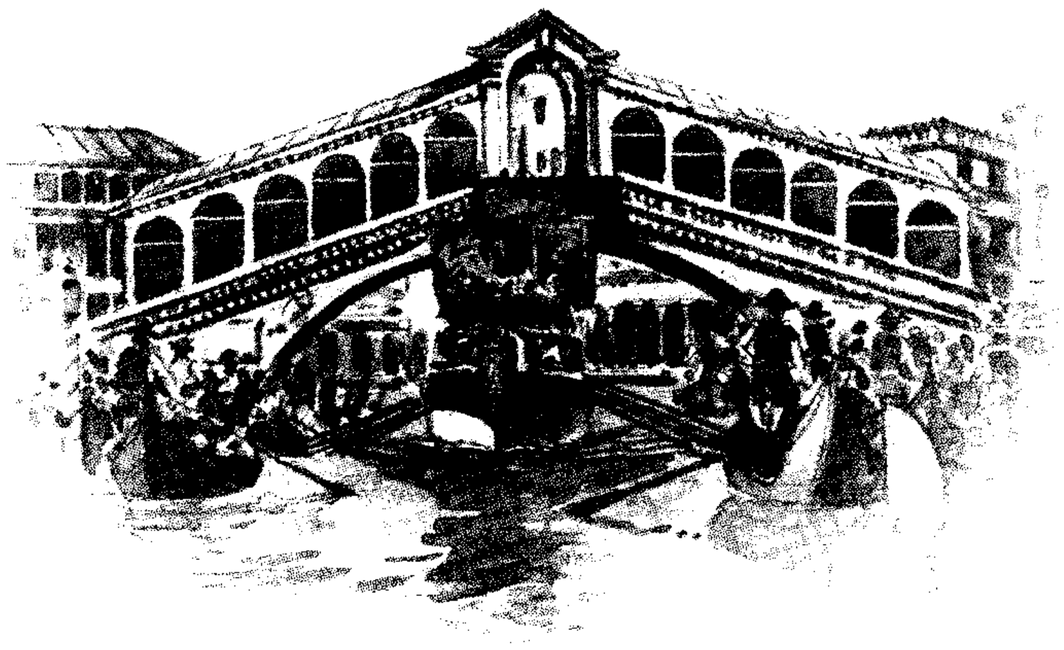

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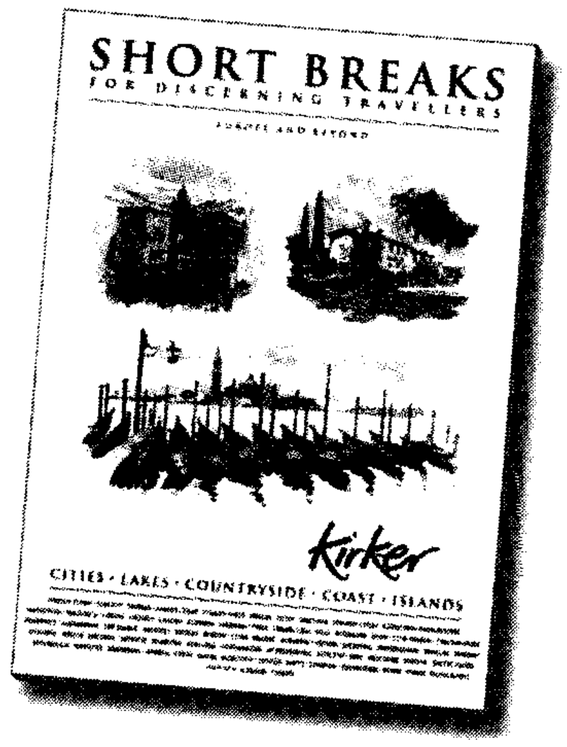

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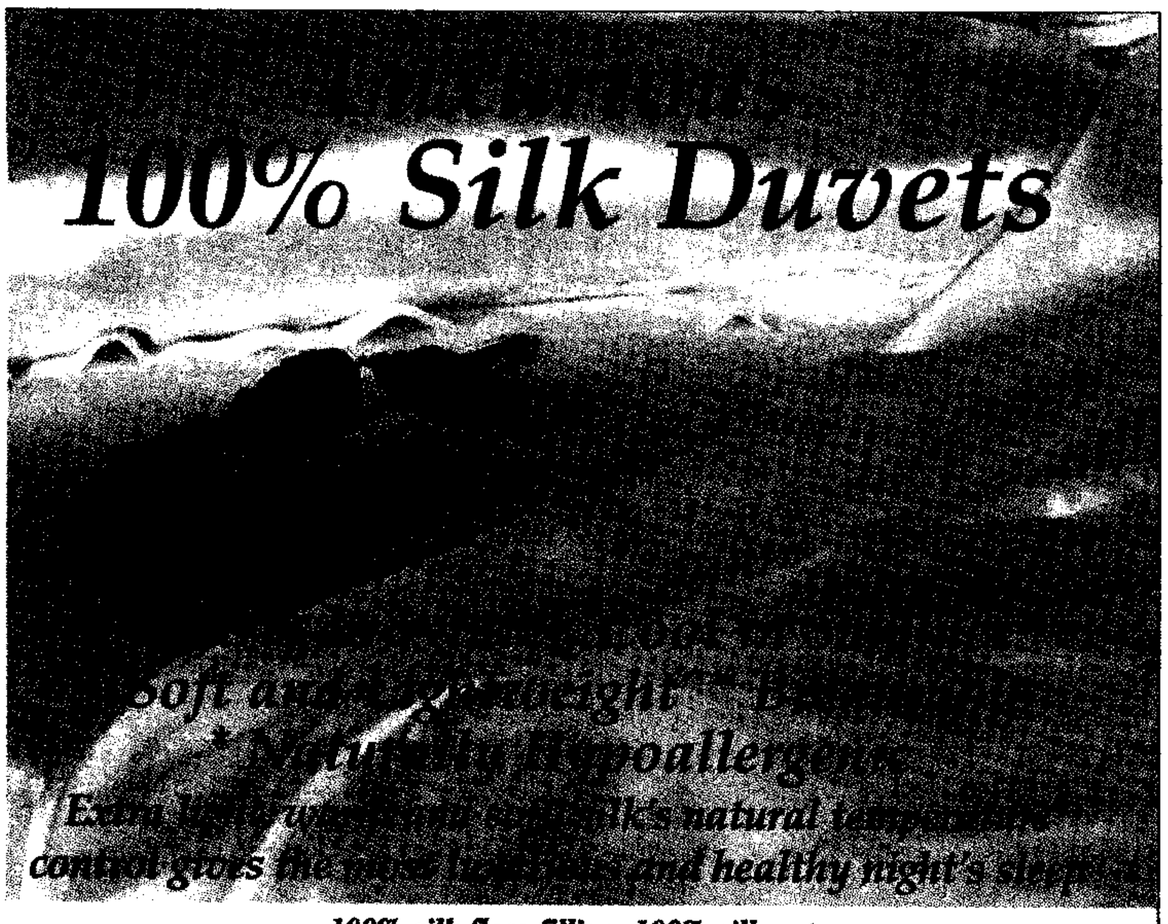

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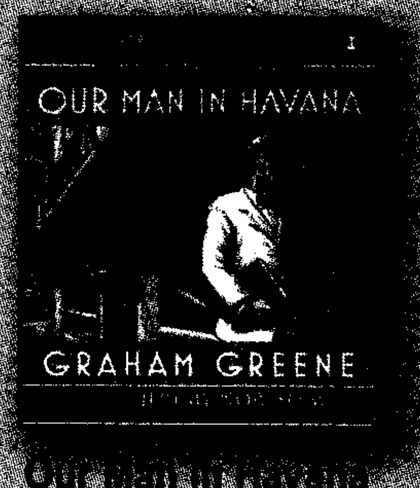

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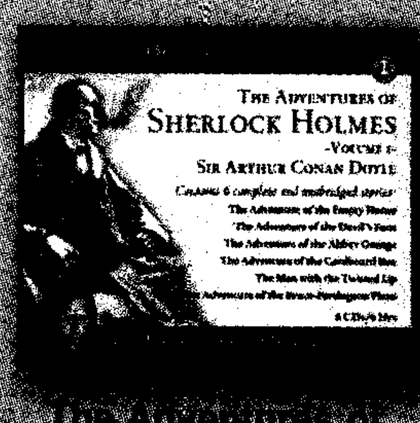

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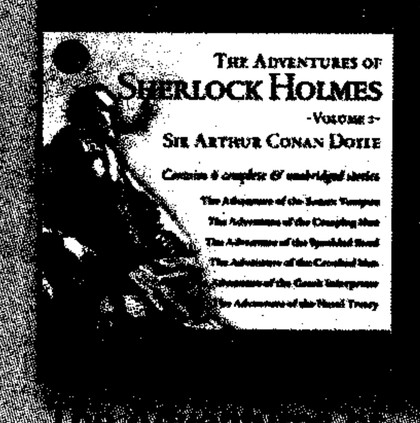

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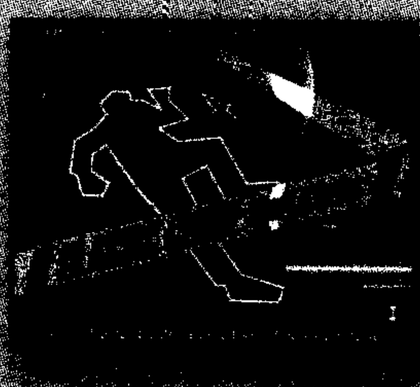

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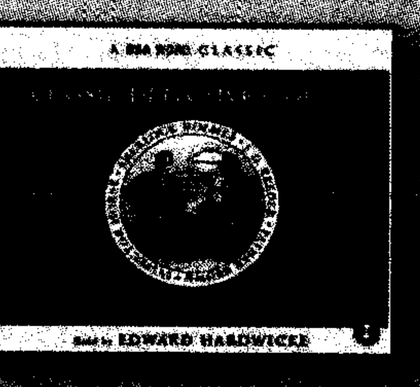

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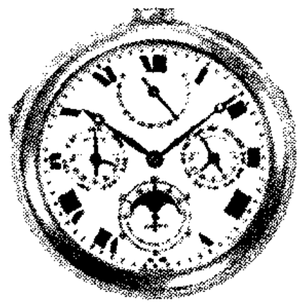

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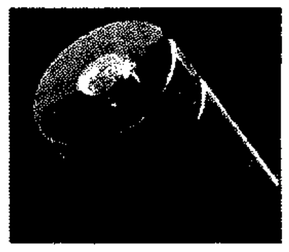

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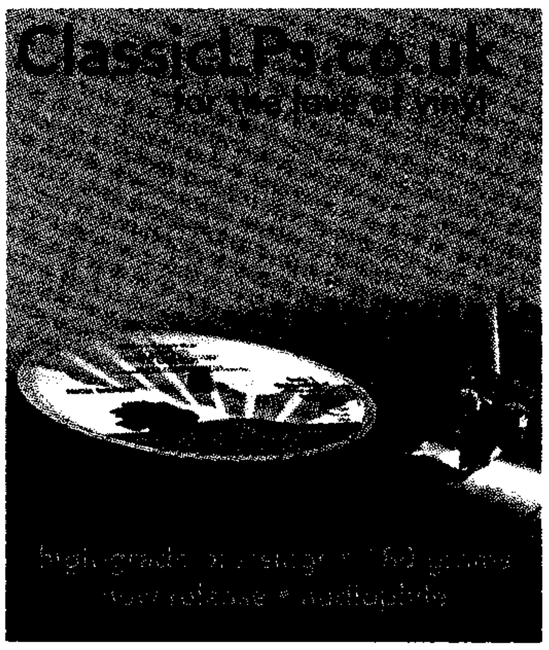

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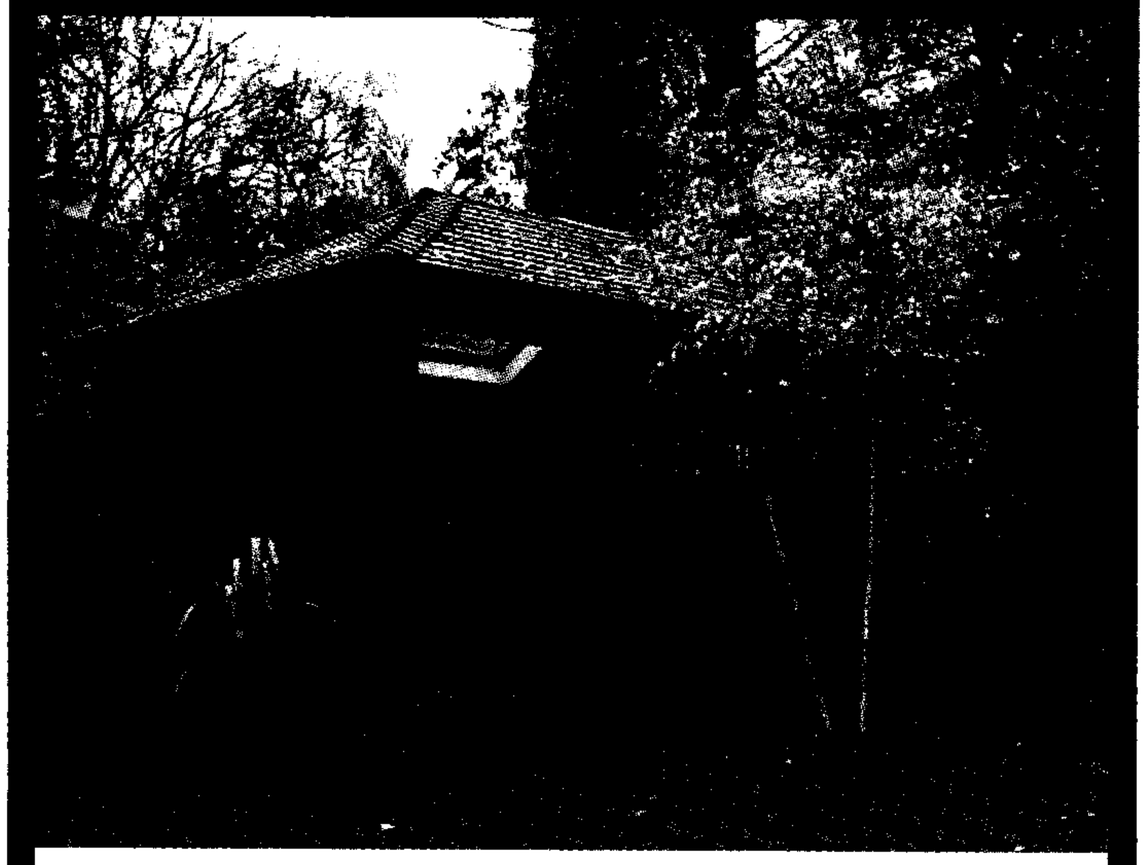

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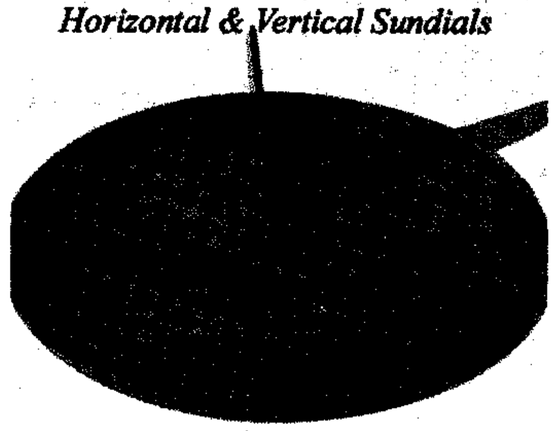

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by Nick Daws

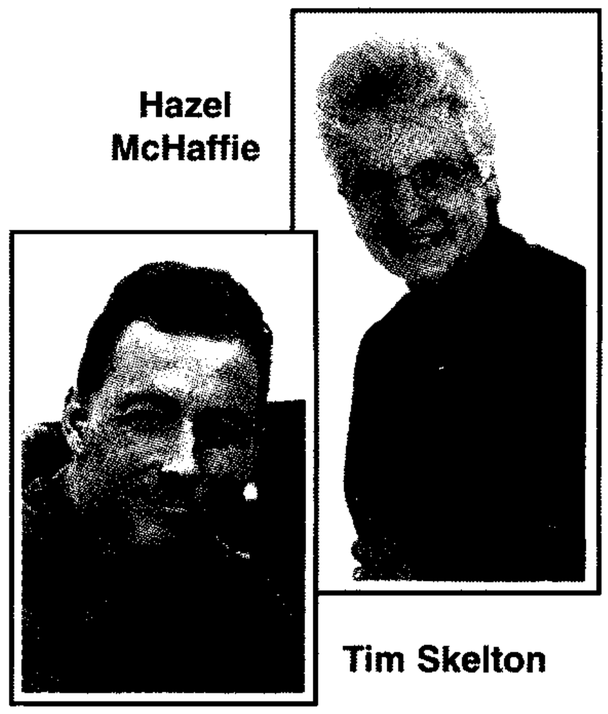
When distance-learning pioneer Ernest Metcalfe founded The Writers Bureau in the late 1980s, he can hardly have dared hope that twenty years on it would be acknowledged as Britain's leading writing school. Yet so it proved, and this year The Writers Bureau ran its 20th Anniversary Award to celebrate this landmark, and to recognise and reward the hard work of Writers Bureau students.

Students such as Tim Skelton. An engineer by profession, he had always harboured an ambition to write, and at the age of 40 signed up with The Writers Bureau. The decision changed his life: "My writing career took off exponentially. In 2005 I started appearing regularly in lifestyle and in-flight magazines. The following year I was commissioned by Bradt Travel Guides to write a guidebook to Luxembourg. And in the last year I've appeared in The Times and The Independent, and updated guidebooks for Fodor's, Thomas Cook, and the AA."

"My writing career took off exponentially."

Another 20th Anniversary Award winner is Hazel McHaffie. Hazel wanted to make her academic work in Medical Ethics more accessible to people, and decided to write the themes into novels. Following her Writers Bureau course, Hazel has had five novels published, and appeared at the Edinburgh International Book Festival in 2008. She also has her own website at www.hazelmchaffie.com.

Sometimes studying with The Writers Bureau takes students down new and unexpected paths. Award-winner Patricia Holness originally enrolled on The Writers Bureau's Writing for Children course. However, she soon realised that what she was learning applied to other types of writing as well. She is now a full-time writer, regularly selling short stories for both children and adults. She also has a monthly column in Devon Life.



These are just a selection from the inspirational true stories highlighted by The Writers Bureau's 20th Anniversary Awards. There's no reason why YOU couldn't be their next success story. With a 15-day free trial and money-back guarantee, there is nothing to lose and potentially a whole new career to gain! So why not visit their website at www.writersbureau.com or call on Freephone 0800 856 2008 for more information?

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AWARD WINNING WRITER

Christina Jones, Oxfordshire

'So far, I have had sixteen novels published. The Writers Bureau helped make this possible for me. Within six months of enrolling on my course I was having work commissioned by editors and I still work regularly for magazines.'

Keith Gregson, Sunderland

'In the last three years I have had almost 250 features published in national and regional magazines and newspapers. I have also had books and booklets published at the request of recognised publishers and payment has contributed considerably to my general income. Thanks to you all.'

Beate Allerton, Aberdeenshire

'Five months into the course my first article was published, soon followed by others. My commissioned features to date are worth £3040, completely exceeding all of my expectations. With the help of the course I have begun to realise my lifetime ambition which seemed completely unimaginable this time last year.'

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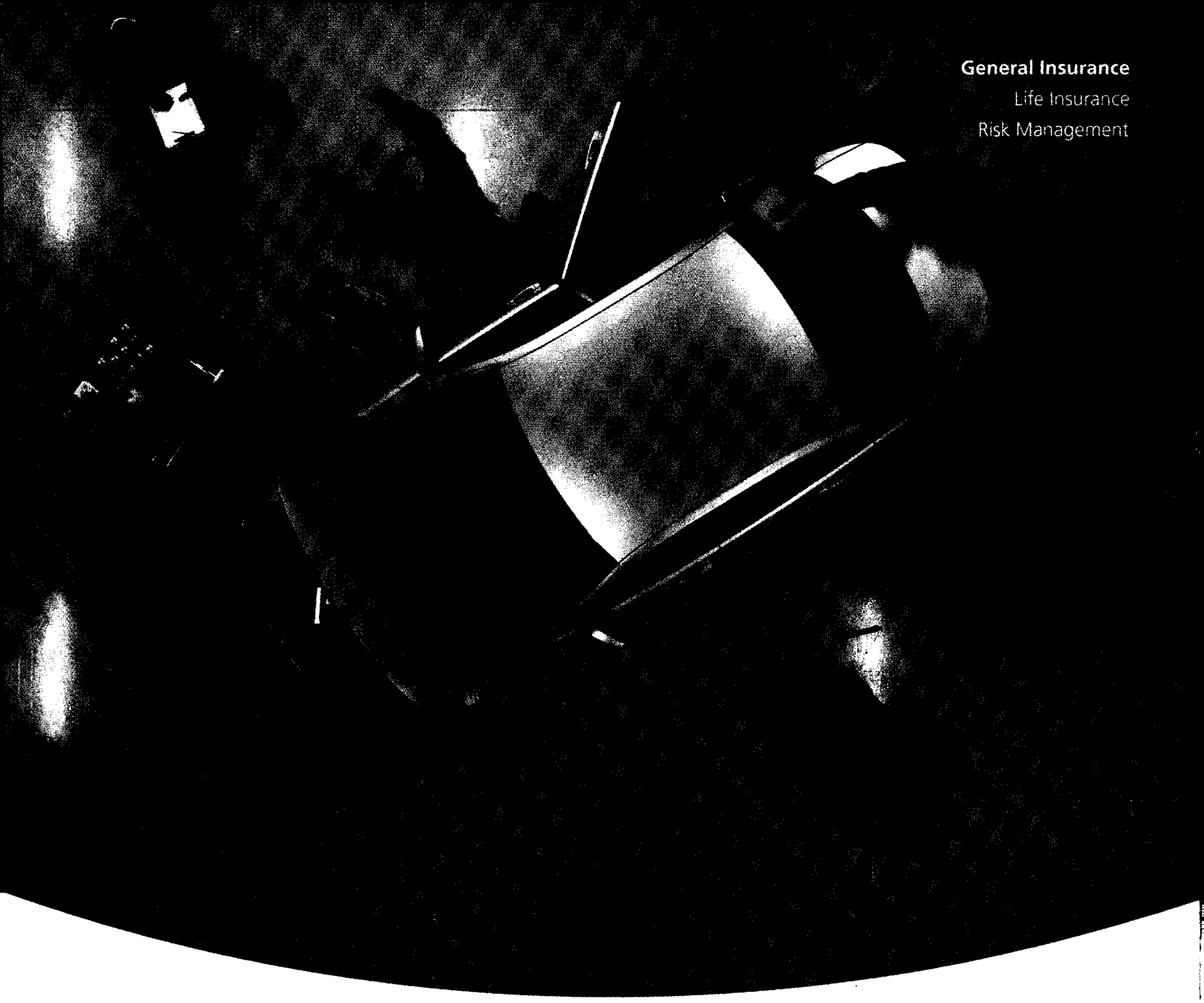
20 Years of Success



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